BETWEEN GRAMMARS AND BODIES:
RETHINKING ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA THROUGH ANTIRACIST LANGUAGE EDUCATION
ENTRE GRAMÁTICAS E CORPOS: REPENSANDO O INGLÊS COMO LÍNGUA FRANCA ATRAVÉS DA EDUCAÇÃO LINGUÍSTICA ANTIRRACISTA

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ABSTRACT: This article explores English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) through the lens of antiracist language education, challenging the persistent idealization of the native speaker and the linguistic norms rooted in whiteness. Drawing on decolonial theory and racial literacy, the paper examines how racialized bodies are marginalized in English language teaching (ELT) practices, revealing the entanglement of language, power, and identity in second language teacher education (SLTE). The discussion foregrounds the epistemic resistance enacted by teachers and learners who disrupt hegemonic discourses and legitimize diverse linguistic repertoires. By interrogating the symbolic inclusion of racialized identities in teaching materials and curricula, the article highlights the limitations of superficial diversity and calls for structural transformation in ELT. It argues that ELF-informed teacher education must critically engage with issues of race, coloniality, and linguistic justice to foster equitable pedagogical practices. The paper also reflects on the implications of profiling the ELF-informed teacher of English, emphasizing the need for transcultural awareness, multilingual sensitivity, and a commitment to dismantling racial hierarchies in language education. Ultimately, this contribution seeks to enrich the ongoing debate on ELF and SLTE by proposing a framework that integrates racial literacy into the professional development of English language teachers.
Keywords: English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), Racial Literacy, Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE).

RESUMO: Este artigo explora o inglês como língua franca (ILF) sob a perspectiva da educação linguística antirracista, desafiando a persistente idealização do falante nativo e as normas linguísticas enraizadas na branquitude. Com base na teoria decolonial e no letramento racial, o texto examina como corpos racializados são marginalizados nas práticas de ensino de inglês (ELT, em inglês), revelando o entrelaçamento entre linguagem, poder e identidade na formação de professores de línguas (SLTE, em inglês). A discussão destaca a resistência epistêmica promovida por docentes e aprendizes que rompem com discursos hegemônicos e legitimam repertórios linguísticos diversos. Ao

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BETWEEN GRAMMARS AND BODIES:
RETHINKING ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA THROUGH ANTIRACIST LANGUAGE
EDUCATION – FIORESE, John.

133

interrogar a inclusão simbólica de identidades racializadas em materiais didáticos e currículos, o artigo evidencia as limitações da diversidade superficial e propõe uma transformação estrutural no ensino de inglês. Argumenta-se que a formação docente informada por ILF deve engajar-se criticamente com questões de raça, colonialidade e justiça linguística para promover práticas pedagógicas equitativas. O texto também reflete sobre as implicações de se traçar o perfil da/o professor/a de inglês informada/o por ILF, enfatizando a necessidade de consciência transcultural, sensibilidade multilíngue e compromisso com o desmantelamento das hierarquias raciais na educação linguística. Em última instância, esta contribuição busca enriquecer o debate atual sobre ILF e formação de professoras/es de línguas ao propor um modelo que integra o letramento racial ao desenvolvimento profissional de professoras/es de inglês.
Palavras-chave: Inglês como Língua Franca (ILF), Letramento Racial, Formação de Professores de Línguas (SLTE).

INTRODUCTION

English language education is deeply entangled with colonial histories, racial hierarchies, and epistemic exclusion. As English continues to function as a global lingua franca, its pedagogical frameworks often reproduce ideologies that privilege whiteness and native-speaker norms. This article engages with English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) through the lens of antiracist language education, arguing that Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE) must confront the racialized structures embedded in its practices and discourses.

To ground this inquiry, and in order to confront epistemological racism and decolonize scholarly knowledge (Kubota, 2020), I agree with Diniz de Figueiredo and Martinez (2019, p. 4) when they state that "by truly assuming who we are and exposing how we localize other scholars and their theories, we might be able to shift the universality of white Eurocentric knowledge." In other words, we should make our loci of enunciation clear. For this reason, I bring myself to the fore with the objective of expressing where the knowledge I produce comes from. I am a white man from southern Brazil. My parents are smallholder farmers and I spent my childhood, adolescence and early adulthood with them and my three sisters in the countryside, in a neighborhood of Italian descendants, a community I am part of. I write about antiracist education herein from a white locus. Even if my family's economic circumstances were not the best, I acknowledge all the privileges I have had for being white. My engagement with epistemic justice started when I began to question some of the universalized ways of social

BETWEEN GRAMMARS AND BODIES:
RETHINKING ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA THROUGH ANTIRACIST LANGUAGE
EDUCATION – FIORESE, John.

134

interaction within my community. I observed incoherences between the ways people spoke about Black individuals, and the ways they actually behaved in specific relational contexts. Whereas everyday discourse was usually framed in friendly terms, some implicit boundaries emerged regarding the types of relationships considered acceptable, particularly in romantic contexts. These contradictions made me realize that there was a hierarchization of human beings based on ethnicity in that context. Such dynamics are not confined to this local setting, but they mirror global patterns of exclusion, such as demonstrated by Quijano:

> Social relations founded on the category of race produced new historical social identities in America – Indians, blacks, and mestizos – and redefined others. Terms such as *Spanish* and *Portuguese*, and much later *European*, which until then indicated only geographic origin or country of origin, acquired from then on a racial connotation in reference to the new identities. Insofar as the social relations that were being configured were relations of domination, such identities were considered constitutive of the hierarchies, places, and corresponding social roles, and consequently of the model of colonial domination that was being imposed. In other words, race and racial identity were established as instruments of basic social classification. (Quijano, 2000, p. 534).

The classification pointed out by Quijano has several impacts on widespread concepts and the way we understand the universe. In other words, the racial hierarchization of human beings established by coloniality forms the dominant cosmology that produces the valid relations that may be established in the modern world. It happens through racialization which is "the process that dehumanizes, the processes of dehumanization that reduce people by putting them in situations and relations that stripe them of their humanity." (Veronelli, 2015, p. 113).

Within the broader field of SLTE, questions of racialization and the hierarchization of Englishes have long shaped how teachers and learners are positioned. Traditional approaches often reproduce native-speakerism and privilege standardized forms of English, reinforcing racial and linguistic hierarchies. While ELF scholarship has challenged the dominance of native norms, it has rarely engaged directly with the racialized dimensions of these hierarchies. This paper seeks to bridge that gap by examining how racialization, epistemic justice, and market dynamics intersect in SLTE. By linking ELF critique to racial literacy, the discussion highlights how teacher education can move beyond symbolic inclusion and address the structural inequities that sustain coloniality in language education.

BETWEEN GRAMMARS AND BODIES:
RETHINKING ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA THROUGH ANTIRACIST LANGUAGE
EDUCATION – FIORESE, John.

135

Having said that, there is no need to say that coloniality affects all realms of existence, therefore, SLTE may also be analyzed by means of a decolonial look. The first aspect that could be taken into consideration is that even if I talk about '*second* language', I am aware that "*languages*, *conceptions of languageness* and the *metalanguages* used to describe them are inventions." (Makoni; Pennycook, 2007, p. 1). As a field of inquiry, SLTE studies processes linked to the way language teachers become teachers, yet the word *second* is inserted in the colonial idea that languages have boundaries and are completely separate entities. As Makoni and Pennycook (2007, p. 1) state, "languages were, in the most literal sense, invented, particularly as part of the Christian/colonial and nationalistic projects in different parts of the globe." Racialization plays a key role in separating languages and human beings and classifying them into real or lesser.

Drawing on decolonial theory and racial literacy, this paper critiques the native speaker ideology and its entanglement with whiteness, neoliberalism, and linguistic exclusion. It explores how racialized bodies are marginalized in English language teaching (ELT), and how symbolic inclusion often masks deeper structural inequities. Through the concept of ELF *feito no Brasil* (Duboc, 2019; Duboc; Siqueira, 2020), the discussion centers the body as a site of knowledge and resistance, challenging the structuralist separation of language from identity.

The article argues that SLTE must integrate racial literacy and decolonial pedagogy to prepare ELF-informed teachers who are critically aware of how race, power, and language intersect. It proposes a framework for profiling such teachers, emphasizing the need for transcultural awareness, multilingual sensitivity, and a commitment to dismantling racial hierarchies in language education. Ultimately, this contribution seeks to enrich the ongoing debate on ELF and SLTE by reimagining English as a site of epistemic resistance and pedagogical transformation.

DELINEATING KEY CONCEPTS

This text draws on several interrelated but distinct frameworks, namely, antiracist language education, racial literacy, critical language education and decolonial pedagogy. While these terms share a commitment to challenging inequities in language teaching, they are not synonymous. Defining their meanings and relationships is essential to avoid conceptual overlap and to strengthen coherence.

- Antiracist language education refers to pedagogical practices that actively confront racism in language teaching and learning. It emphasizes dismantling racial hierarchies in classrooms and curricula, ensuring that linguistic diversity is valued rather than marginalized.

- Racial literacy is a specific competence within antiracist education. It is the ability to recognize, analyze, and respond to racial structures and hierarchies. It equips teachers and learners to identify how race shapes linguistic legitimacy and to intervene against inequitable practices.

- Critical language education situates language teaching within broader social struggles, highlighting how language can both reproduce and resist inequality. It provides the overarching critical orientation that connects linguistic practices to issues of power, identity, and justice.

- Decolonial pedagogy foregrounds the dismantling of colonial epistemologies and the validation of marginalized knowledges. It challenges Eurocentric universals and insists on pluriversal approaches that recognize diverse loci of enunciation.

Taken together, these frameworks inform the analysis in this text. Racial literacy is proposed as a lens within SLTE, antiracist language education provides the pedagogical orientation, critical language education situates the work in broader struggles, and decolonial pedagogy anchors the epistemological stance.

1 INCLUSION, MARKET, AND THE PERSISTENCE OF COLONIALITY

The repetition of discourses that subordinate linguistic forms diverging from whiteness becomes internalized even by individuals whose own linguistic performances are marginalized. This mirrors what Maldonado-Torres (2007, p. 243) describes about coloniality: "as modern subjects we breath coloniality all the time and everyday." Resistance to these processes begins with identifying the various colonial discourses that constitute us. As Gomes (2025, p. 10) states, "resistance lies in the (re)cognition of diverse discursive strategies and languages, since the primary form of control is discourse."[2] Beyond resisting coloniality, true change occurs through the interruption of these logics.

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[2] All citations were translated to English by the author. Original in Portuguese: "a resistência está no (re)conhecimento de diversas estratégias discursivas e de linguagens, uma vez que a principal forma de controle é o discurso".

However, interruption does not happen solely at the subjective level. As Colaço and Alencar (2016, p. 86) argue, "the 'de-alienation' of Black individuals does not occur only in the subjectivity impregnated by colonialism, but through the transformation of their objective and material conditions"[3]. Without objective and material change, no system of oppression can be dismantled.

In relation to English, beyond the discursive system that continually legitimizes an exclusionary standard, there are economic forces tied to major publishing houses that sell these discourses in textbooks used worldwide. Within a neoliberal logic, economic interests focus solely on profit, disregarding the material conditions that hierarchize social groups. The inclusion of Black, Indigenous, and non-Western characters in teaching materials may appear to diversify representation, but it does not interrupt exclusionary logics. When analyzing the presence of these groups in textbooks, it becomes evident that this is often market-driven inclusion, where marginalized groups generate profit for publishers but are still conditioned to engage with language through exclusionary frameworks. It reveals itself as a colonial strategy of adding diverse people to a discourse that validates hegemonic forms while subjugating both racialized or minoritized linguistic expressions and the same people it claims to include.

While the inclusion of diverse characters may signal a positive attitude toward mitigation of inequities, it often remains symbolic. Without structural changes in how language is taught and assessed, such inclusion risks becoming a market strategy rather than a pedagogical commitment. True transformation requires rethinking whose language practices are validated and how curricula can dismantle, rather than reproduce, colonial hierarchies, as they so often do. ELF helps with this transformation when it legitimizes learners' practices and states that meaning is built into each interaction (Jordão, 2023). If the way meaning is produced necessarily needs a context, textbooks need more than just images representing oppressed minoritized groups, but stories that express their struggles.

SLTE is pivotal to deconstruct such logics. While textbooks continue to tokenize diversity, the responsibility of breaking with this cycle of working through superficiality relies on language teachers. Critical racial literacy needs to be encouraged by means of

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[3] Original in Portuguese: "a 'desalienação' da pessoa negra não se dá apenas na subjetividade impregnada de colonialismo, mas na transformação de suas condições objetivas e materiais".

BETWEEN GRAMMARS AND BODIES:
RETHINKING ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA THROUGH ANTIRACIST LANGUAGE
EDUCATION – FIORESE, John.

138

questioning possible problems such as the mere presence in textbooks of people who are different from the white standard without much thought on their struggles, culture, linguistic characteristics, or constructed illegitimacy. SLTE must also make teachers aware that they will never be able to handle all the different possibilities regarding accents in English that exist in the world, yet they should know that irrespective of what they know, all possibilities are legitimate, given their status in certain communities throughout the planet. SLTE should also make explicit the fact that standard language forms are connected to a privileged white group, and that disrupting this association first requires critical awareness.

Moving beyond symbolic gestures toward a linguistic racial-informed stance requires an approach that is not based on deficit. In language teaching/learning, deficit is usually described as a lack of vocabulary and/or the ability to produce syntactic constructions that are considered standard. Deficit itself is racialized, since having a "perfect" English means being able to write and speak the white standard. Through SLTE, it is possible to shift this deficit to unequal relationships such as ELT materials that do not respond to the constant challenges lived by certain populations on a daily basis. This awareness helps teachers recognize major acts of global violence, and also the microaggressions that may occur in classroom settings. Critically assessing the world helps with the interruption of injustices perpetuated by coloniality, and SLTE is key to form teachers with such an awareness.

The persistence of coloniality in market-driven inclusion demonstrates how diversity is often commodified without dismantling the hierarchies that sustain exclusion. These dynamics reveal that symbolic gestures of representation do not interrupt the deeper structures of inequality. Instead, they reinforce the privileging of certain linguistic forms and bodies. This same logic is evident in the constructions of the native speaker ideal, where whiteness operates as the unmarked standard and racialized repertoires are marginalized. Moving from the market's commodification of diversity to the ideological construction of nativeness allows us to see how coloniality permeates both economic and discursive dimensions of English language teaching.

2 DECONSTRUCTING THE NATIVE SPEAKER AND WHITENESS IN ELF

The colonial logics that shape market-driven inclusion also underpin the construction of the native speaker ideal. Just as diversity is commodified without disrupting hierarchies, the figure of the native speaker reproduces whiteness as the unmarked standard of legitimacy in English. This imagined figure (often associated with white, middle-class, heterosexual identities) functions not only as a linguistic benchmark but also as a cultural and racialized construct. In this way, the native speaker becomes a symbol of exclusion, erasing the linguistic and bodily diversity of those who do not conform to the dominant norm. Examining nativeness through the lens of racial literacy reveals how deeply racialization and coloniality are embedded in ELF discourses, and why SLTE must confront these dynamics to foster more equitable pedagogical practices.

The field of ELF began with studies that, to some extent, could be considered structuralist, as they focused on phonological (Jenkins, 2000) and lexicogrammatical (Seidlhofer, 2001) aspects of language. Later on, influenced by the field of World Englishes (WE), the primary focus became the description of varieties spoken in different countries. Over the years, the influence of WE diminished, contributing to a shift in the field. Concepts that were once widely accepted began to be questioned. Examples that have significantly impacted the field include the deconstruction of the native speaker concept and the problematization of linguistic belonging. Jenkins (2015) identifies three distinct phases in ELF research, the most recent of which involves challenges such as translanguaging and discussions of language as a semiotic repertoire without clearly defined boundaries.

The deconstruction of the native speaker concept in ELF can be approached through antiracist language education, as the essence of this concept is based on a fictional figure shaped by a white stereotype. The image of the native English speaker is commonly associated with a white, middle-class American man. This image is often accompanied by others: middle-class neighborhoods with freshly painted houses in "neutral" colors, a heterosexual family with school-aged children, a front yard, surrounding grass, a new car, and an entire imagery constructed through media and discourse about what it means to be a U.S. citizen. The native speaker is the epitome of a national identity essentialized through stereotypes that erase any aspect deemed negative by neoliberalism. In this imagery, there are no scenarios of inequality involving Black, Indigenous, or gender-nonconforming bodies, i.e., those who do not fit the socially imposed heterosexual norm.

Race should always be analyzed as "produced in conjunction with class, gender, sexuality, religion, (trans)national, and other axes of social differentiation" (Alim, 2016, p. 6), so that multiple means of oppression linked to race are carefully examined. The native speaker is an imposition rooted in power relations that erase all other bodily possibilities, marginalizing not only people but also the linguistic forms associated with these social groups.

These racialized constructions of the native speaker also shape how English teachers are educated and evaluated. The idealization of whiteness and 'native-like' proficiency often influences curricula, assessment, and hiring practices. Even when teachers are aware of linguistic differences as legitimate forms, the type of assessment provided by proficiency tests, and how standard their skills must be in order to be hired by certain institutions remain very traditional, as a response to market pressures. Profiling the ELF-informed teacher requires a shift toward racial literacy and critical awareness of how power operates in pedagogical spaces, such as the economic forces that influence their linguistic performances.

SLTE is a space with the potential to challenge racialized norms, preparing ELF-informed teachers who are racially literate. In SLTE, "*knowledge for teaching* must be understood holistically, and the interdependence between *what is taught* and *how it is taught* becomes crucial to both the processes of learning-to-teach as well as the development of teaching expertise." (Johnson; Golombek, 2011, p. 3). As with any type of teacher education programme, we should always pay attention to the possibility of reproducing inequalities that are present in society in SLTE, since our colonial subjective constitutions usually prevent us from seeing beyond the universalized and normalized contexts. ELF awareness is a good step to break cycles of linguistic injustice, since it sheds light on aspects that tend to reproduce linguistic hierarchies in terms of what is considered to be correct and what is not. However, the discussions about ELF usually do not consider the racial aspects that are present in language. For this reason, racial literacy should be inserted in the realm of concerns addressed by ELF, such as ELF should always be present in SLTE.

By exposing how the native speaker ideal reproduces whiteness and delegitimizes racialized repertoires, we see that coloniality is not only discursive but pedagogical. These hierarchies shape how teachers are trained, how learners are evaluated, and how

legitimacy is assigned in classrooms. For SLTE, this means that confronting native-speakerism is not optional but essential, since teacher education must prepare educators to recognize the racialized foundations of linguistic hierarchies and to challenge them in practice. Linking ELF critique with racial literacy thus provides a pathway for SLTE to move beyond the reproduction of exclusionary norms and toward the cultivation of pedagogies that validate diverse repertoires and dismantle racialized structures.

3 ENGLISH, POWER, AND EPISTEMIC RESISTANCE

There is an inextricable relationship between body and language, as they mutually constitute each other in social practices. A crucial aspect, however, is that the discursive construction of race shapes social relations in such a way that skin color is perceived, therefore judged, before any spoken or signed words are enunciated. Thus, the body is also word, text, and discourse. As Gomes (2025, p. 6) affirms, "texts and discourses are not impartial." As a partial discourse, the body demands attention to the privileges attributed to bodies that are socially constructed as neutral and unmarked, namely, white bodies. This social construction of unquestioned privilege enjoyed by white bodies, combined with the tendency to dominate non-white bodies, is referred to as whiteness (Laborne, 2014).

To deconstruct the racist mechanisms that dominate Black, Indigenous, Asian, and other racialized bodies, it is necessary to engage with antiracist language education. Within such an educational approach, racial literacy plays a crucial role. As Bonfim (2023, p. 48) states: "white individuals must develop and/or be engaged in processes of racial literacy and, as a consequence, begin to enact changes in their micro-loci of power and action, contributing, within language teaching, to an antiracist applied Linguistics".[4]

Racial literacy processes not only serve to denounce racial injustice but also raise awareness of the non-neutrality of whiteness's socially, economically, and symbolically privileged positions. These positions manifest in countless ways, including linguistically. Racialized bodies are often viewed through a lens of presumed lack of education or knowledge, with even their syntactic constructions being marginalized. This is evident in standardized English when considering the native speaker myth, whose linguistic

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[4] Original in Portuguese: "é preciso que sujeitos brancos(as) desenvolvam e/ou sejam interpelados por processos de letramento racial e que, como consequência disto, passem a efetuar mudanças em seus microlugares de poder e atuação contribuindo, no âmbito do ensino de línguas, para uma Linguística aplicada antirracista.".

BETWEEN GRAMMARS AND BODIES:
RETHINKING ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA THROUGH ANTIRACIST LANGUAGE
EDUCATION – FIORESE, John.

142

constructions align with dominant norms that differ from the linguistic performances of racialized or economically disadvantaged individuals. As Rosa and Flores (2017, p. 5) state, "even when colonized subjects complied with the imposition of European languages, they continued to be positioned as racial Others who would never be fully European – and, by extension, fully human."

These dynamics are especially evident in language assessment, where deviation from white linguistic norms is often penalized. Standardized testing and classroom evaluations tend to privilege dominant accents and syntactic patterns, reinforcing racial hierarchies in language learning. ELF challenges these norms by recognizing linguistic differences as legitimate and communicatively effective, even though it has not attributed several inequities to a racialized dimension. Recognizing race as a structuring factor in perceived "deviations" from linguistic norms (through a lens of racial literacy) opens a pathway to linking such inequities to ELF critique, with SLTE serving as the mediating space for this connection.

Approaching ELF through racial literacy goes beyond legitimizing English learners as individuals with rich linguistic repertoires. It also reveals the power dynamics between white and racialized individuals in social practices involving English. The set of semiotic resources accessed during a linguistic performance may be validated or marginalized depending on its association with racialized bodies. English learners often face the imposition of white linguistic standards, despite the fact that most of the world diverges from these norms. This imposition devalues knowledge, generating frustration and insecurity. Through ELF as an attitude (Haus, 2024), learners are legitimized irrespective of their origins or ethno-racial positions.

SLTE may play an important role in the development of racial literacy in ELF by establishing discussions that consider the stigmatization of linguistic practices produced by racialized populations "regardless of the extent to which these practices might seem to correspond to standardized norms" (Rosa; Flores, 2017, p. 3). Taking this element into consideration in language teacher education is a step toward the assurance of less unjust racial relations involving English, acknowledging that while such interventions can mitigate epistemic injustice, they cannot fully eliminate it within the structures of the modern/colonial world system. Complete elimination of epistemic injustices would require systemic transformation beyond the scope of language education alone.

BETWEEN GRAMMARS AND BODIES:
RETHINKING ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA THROUGH ANTIRACIST LANGUAGE
EDUCATION – FIORESE, John.

143

English, as a named language (Makoni; Pennycook, 2007), that is, as a strictly bounded set of semiotic resources, is commonly associated with hegemonic groups, given its global spread through colonization. When English is labeled as "belonging" to the colonizer, the fluidity of language is overlooked, and linguistic repertoires, formed from a myriad of semiotic resources often associated with different languages, are ignored. When we treat language as social practice (Brahim et al., 2021), we recognize that English is not merely a vehicle for white-hegemonic ideals of global elites, but it also allows resistance and connection among groups and individuals who are racially subalternized by colonial power structures. In this way:

> English can provide access to knowledge and exchanges with thinkers around the world who share similar struggles and theoretical-epistemological paradigms. (...) It is possible to appropriate English, even as an ideological instrument of Western white consumer culture, and reframe it as a language of resistance to dominant ideologies, a language of denunciation against human rights violations, and a language of existence amid the logic of extermination targeting those who reject neoliberal ideology and expose its violence. (Mulico; Costa, 2021, p. 1277)[5].

Discourses surrounding the native speaker are tied to the very construction of English as a language, establishing a pattern that disseminates white ways of pronouncing words, structuring ideas, and being/acting in the world. Racial literacy offers a way to reflect on these aspects, "as one of the means to denaturalize racism among white individuals" (Bonfim, 2023, p. 48)[6]. The racism embedded in the native speaker concept and hegemonic discourses about English must be exposed as mechanisms that uphold privileges linked to whiteness. This maintenance occurs not only through the defense of white norms as correct but also through the lack of critical engagement with the privileges that these norms generate to whiteness. As Borges (2021, p. 832) states, "silence is a point of attention in the performativity of whiteness because it is performative of racism, in the complacency of the narcissistic pact (...), understood as the disguised white complicity

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[5] Original in Portuguese: "a língua inglesa pode possibilitar acesso a conhecimentos e trocas de saberes com pensadores/as do mundo inteiro que compartilham das mesmas pautas de luta e paradigmas teórico-epistemológicos. (...). é possível nos apropriar do inglês, ainda que instrumento ideológico de consolidação da cultura de consumo ocidental branca das elites econômicas, e ressignificá-lo como língua de resistência às ideologias dominantes, língua de denúncia contra as violações de direitos humanos e de existência em meio à lógica do extermínio de quem não adere à ideologia neoliberal e denuncia suas violências".

[6] Original in Portuguese: "como uma das maneiras de desnaturalização do racismo por parte das branquitudes".

BETWEEN GRAMMARS AND BODIES:
RETHINKING ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA THROUGH ANTIRACIST LANGUAGE
EDUCATION – FIORESE, John.

144

that guarantees privileges"[7]. Silence regarding the privileges of whiteness is itself performative of racism, as it ensures the perpetuation of those privileges.

The critical racial literacy proposed by Bonfim can be understood as a component of critical language education, which is "an approach that aims not only at language teaching but also at developing a critical awareness of language use and its social implications" (Gomes, 2025, p. 15)[8]. Paying attention to language through a critical language education lens means recognizing that it "can both perpetuate and challenge social inequalities" (Gomes, 2025, p. 15)[9], bringing us back to English. Performing English does not necessarily perpetuate inequality; it can also challenge it.

Beyond problematizing the native speaker model, ELF scholarship has begun to question linguistic belonging itself. Rooted in a conception of language as a strictly bounded entity, the paradigm that came before the criticism tended to separate languages as properties of specific groups, a view shaped by the construction of nation-states in the 19th century. Sets of semiotic resources not associated with English were viewed solely as the language of the other, rather than as sets of socially enacted semiotic elements that may be incorporated into any individual's linguistic repertoire. As Gomes (2025, p. 4) affirms, "language is shaped by social, historical, cultural, and ideological aspects, not just structural ones."[10] The structuralist discourses that describe languages as codes reduce English to structural components. This view served both to separate languages and to elevate English as superior, linked to development and prosperity. If languages were not treated as separate entities, it would be impossible to hierarchize them in ways that allow whiteness to enforce or perpetuate its privileges.

The critiques raised by ELF scholarship in its early stages did not address race. There was a questioning of models and linguistic belonging, but no commentary on how these elements contributed to the maintenance and perpetuation of racism. This body-centered critique emerges in Brazil through decoloniality, in a theoretical effort known as ELF *feito no Brasil*, where *feito no Brasil* means *made in Brazil* (Duboc, 2019). According

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[7] Original in Portuguese: "o silêncio é ponto de atenção na performatividade da branquitude porque é performativo de racismo, na complacência do pacto narcísico (...), entendido como a cumplicidade branca dissimulada que garante privilégios".

[8] Original in Portuguese: "uma abordagem que visa não apenas o ensino de línguas, mas também o desenvolvimento de uma consciência crítica sobre o uso da língua(gem) e suas implicações sociais.".

[9] Original in Portuguese: "pode tanto perpetuar quanto desafiar desigualdades sociais".

[10] Original in Portuguese: "a língua se configura a partir de aspectos sociais, históricos, culturais, ideológicos e não apenas estruturais".

to Duboc and Siqueira (2020, p. 234), the expression ELF *feito no Brasil* "attempts to stress the expanding notion of ELF by contemporary Brazilian scholars who have put greater emphasis on the critical and political nature of English and the process of learning and teaching the language in the Brazilian context" (Duboc; Siqueira, 2020, p. 234).

Thinking about ELF in Brazil means aligning with the understanding that "the body that learns languages is also a body constituted (and in constant reconstitution) by social identities of gender, whether a non-binary body, or a body constituted/performed by multiple social identities of race, gender, and sexualities" (Gomes, 2025, p. 9)[11]. Gomes invites us to consider language teaching through the lens of critical language education, i.e., a linguistic teacher education which is responsive to the social demands that arise in literacy practices and events. Linking ELF to this approach means reflecting on aspects that go beyond appearances and immediate accessibility. It means looking at the roots of problems involving English to expose structural issues such as misogyny and racism in society.

ELF has problematized the illegitimacy of non-standard forms since early stages, assessing them as completely possible and adequate, however, the racial factor which establishes its illegitimacy at first place is left aside. Other dimensions intersect with it, such as class and gender, producing multilayered minoritized forms that endure the pressure of normative standards from multiple directions. English teachers and learners will always have diverse racial and cultural backgrounds and those will be reflected in the linguistic forms they produce in English. These linguistic forms are characterized by non-standardized features that suffer multiple pressures related to race, class and/or gender, nevertheless, these features are usually erased or just considered wrong due to white standards which are disguised as neutral and universal. Through the purported universality of white standards for English, body is disregarded as an aspect that is not connected to mind.

In a decolonial project, the theoretical effort of ELF *feito no Brasil* seeks to contribute to the deconstruction of the dualism between body and mind proposed by Descartes. As an alternative to the coloniality of power, knowledge, and being, ELF *feito no Brasil* emerges as an epistemic stance (Fiorese, 2025), or, expanding on that, an onto-epistemic

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[11] Original in Portuguese: "o corpo que aprende línguas é também um corpo constituído (e em constante processo de reconstituição) de identidades sociais de gênero, ou é um corpo não binário, ou é um corpo constituído/performatizado por múltiplas identidades sociais de raça, de gênero, de sexualidades.".

BETWEEN GRAMMARS AND BODIES:
RETHINKING ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA THROUGH ANTIRACIST LANGUAGE
EDUCATION – FIORESE, John.

146

stance. Within this framework, the body plays a crucial role, as "our bodies are invested by and within power relations, since the material and symbolic presence of the body in speech acts imposes itself on linguistic effects" (Bonfim, 2016, p. 17)[12]. The validity of an utterance, whether spoken or signed, is determined by the body that enunciates it. A black, female, LGBTQIAPN+, disabled body, or one that intersects such identities, is often sufficient for an utterance to be invalidated. In the case of English, syntactic constructions, vocabulary, or accents associated with these groups are frequently dismissed, rendering them linguistically marginalized.

If language exists as social practice, it cannot be separated from the identities of its speakers. "The term identity must be linked to the body; that is, identities are corporeal (...) if, on the one hand, there are no identities without bodies, on the other, there are no texts without bodies" (Bonfim, 2016, p. 19)[13]. Identities are constituted through language and, as Bonfim affirms, are corporeal, since identity cannot exist outside the body. When Bonfim states that there are no texts without bodies, he critiques the supposed neutrality of science. Knowledge is always situated in the bodies of those who produce it, yet colonial efforts persist in separating subjects from knowledge, as if no trace of subjectivity was involved in its production.

A similar phenomenon occurs with English, where constant attempts are made to detach the language from its speakers, transforming it into a structure that stands above them. Phrases like "the rule doesn't allow this" or "that's incorrect according to grammar" are common, yet we know that rules and grammar only emerged after oral practices. The very compilation of oral rules into books was based on patterns spoken by hegemonic groups, subordinating all other linguistic forms. This produces a type of non-existence, where discourse neutralizes the language of the oppressor while simultaneously deauthorizing the language of the oppressed. What the oppressed speak ends up as "non-existent", simply because it is absent from grammar books.

4 PROFILING THE ELF-INFORMED TEACHER: TOWARD RACIAL LITERACY IN SLTE

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[12] Original in Portuguese: "nossos corpos são investidos pelas e nas relações de poder, pois a presença material e simbólica do corpo no dizer (ato de fala) é uma marca que se impõe no efeito linguístico.".

[13] Original in Portuguese: "O termo identidade deve estar vinculado ao corpo, ou seja, identidades são corpóreas (...) se por um lado não existem identidades sem corpos, por outro, não existem textos sem corpos."

BETWEEN GRAMMARS AND BODIES:
RETHINKING ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA THROUGH ANTIRACIST LANGUAGE
EDUCATION – FIORESE, John.

147

The ELF-informed teacher must be equipped not only with linguistic flexibility but also with racial literacy and decolonial awareness. This profile challenges traditional notions of neutrality and embraces the political nature of language teaching. Teachers should be educated to recognize how race, power, and identity shape classroom interactions and to foster inclusive practices that validate diverse repertoires. Pre-service teachers and in-service teachers might react differently to these discussions, since the former are still in the process of establishing their practices, whereas the latter already have their ways of working. Constructing concepts and perceptions from scratch is usually easier than deconstructing and reconstructing them in different ways, but even in this way:

the introduction of an ELF-aware perspective in English language teaching and teacher education may represent a challenge. English language teaching is linked to an epistemological construct whereby learners, teachers, teacher-educators and publishers rely on deeply held traditions and beliefs. ELF is not a fixed, predetermined entity, it is a way of seeing language, and as such it cannot just be added as a course component in traditional ELT lessons or in a teacher education course. (Sifakis *et al*. 2018, p. 162).

Teacher-educators should be aware of these challenges in SLTE, slowly building concepts that point to a critical view on language. When teachers are learning about teaching practice, they should know that "languages are intrinsically unstable, so usage is always variable" (Seidlhofer, 2008, p. 33.2), and also that norms "are continually in flux – which is why they are so difficult to define." (Seidlhofer, 2008, p. 33.2). At the same time, they should be able to understand the intricate connections that language has with race, opening up a decolonial view on it. Even though languages contain a myriad of norms, those deemed valid are typically aligned with white standards. As Veronelli (2015, p. 119) points out, "the classification of people into superior and inferior races was accompanied by thinking of the expressive tools that they have also in terms of superiority and inferiority. (...) *only* the colonizers have language in the full sense".

In order to break this cycle, SLTE should teach the decolonial pedagogy composed by the triad identify-interrogate-interrupt coloniality (Souza; Duboc, 2021). Teachers must learn how to question established situations and norms and convey this to their students. Even if we have the pressure of teaching standards, we should always mention the onto-epistemic stance in which they are inscribed, showing that just knowing linguistic standards themselves does not necessarily lead to effective communication. The

BETWEEN GRAMMARS AND BODIES:
RETHINKING ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA THROUGH ANTIRACIST LANGUAGE
EDUCATION – FIORESE, John.

148

standards impact people's lives, especially racialized ones, so it is important that teachers know about the coloniality of language and that an act of delinking (Mignolo, 2007) is necessary. According to Mignolo (2007, p. 453):

> de-linking presupposes to move toward a geopolitics of knowledge that on the one hand denounces the pretended universality of a particular ethnicity (body politics), located in a specific part of the planet (geo-politics), that is, Europe where capitalism accumulated as a consequence of colonialism. De-linking then shall be understood as a de-colonial epistemic shift leading to other-universality, that is, to pluri-versality as a universal project.

Understanding the grammars of coloniality helps us to go beyond the teaching of normative grammar or 'native-like' pronunciation without reflection on the injustices that standard linguistic models reproduce. ELT practices will only benefit from ELF and critical racial literacy, since teachers are able to work in ways that promote social justice, going closer to what Mignolo called "pluri-versality". To be ELF-aware through racial literacy is to be transculturally aware; it is to have multilingual sensitivity to students' linguistic repertoires without forgetting that coloniality is always around us, so that we should be cautious not to reproduce or reinforce given practices that help minoritize and oppress certain groups of people.

5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Rethinking English as a Lingua Franca through antiracist language education demands a profound shift in how we conceptualize language, identity, and pedagogy. This paper has argued that ELF must move beyond its descriptive origins to embrace a decolonial stance, one that recognizes the body as central to linguistic legitimacy and challenges the racialized norms embedded in ELT. Language is not a neutral tool; it is a site of struggle, shaped by histories of colonialism and systems of power that continue to marginalize certain voices while privileging others.

The persistence of coloniality in language education is evident in three interconnected dimensions. First, *racialization*: linguistic 'deviations' are often judged through racialized lenses that delegitimize repertoires associated with marginalized communities. Second, *epistemic justice*: these judgments deny the validity of knowledge produced by racialized speakers, reinforcing hierarchies of who is allowed to "own" English. Third, *market dynamics*: diversity os commodified in textbooks and curricula,

BETWEEN GRAMMARS AND BODIES:
RETHINKING ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA THROUGH ANTIRACIST LANGUAGE
EDUCATION – FIORESE, John.

149

where symbolic inclusion generates profit but rarely disrupts exclusionary logics. Taken together, these dimensions reveal how coloniality operates simultaneously at the discursive, epistemic, and economic levels of ELT.

The idealization of native speakerism, the commodification of diversity, and the deficit framing of non-standard linguistic forms are structural dynamics that reflect a broader epistemological order that privileges whiteness, and Eurocentric norms as the default. In this context, SLTE must respond not with superficial reforms but with a deep commitment to cultivating racial literacy. This involves educating teachers to identify, interrogate, and interrupt the colonial logics of exclusion that permeate language education, i.e. racialization in linguistic hierarchies, epistemic injustices that delegitimize certain repertoires, and market-driven forms of inclusion that reproduce colonial logics.

Profiling the ELF-informed teacher thus requires envisioning educators who are linguistically flexible, politically engaged, and critically aware of how race, power, and economics intersect in classrooms. These teachers understand that language is always situated, always embodied, and always implicated in broader social hierarchies. They are prepared to challenge the myth of linguistic neutrality and to foster pedagogies that validate diverse repertoires and resist the reproduction of inequality. Such educators recognize that teaching English is never just about grammar or vocabulary, but also about whose knowledge counts, whose voices are heard, and whose identities are affirmed.

Through the lens of ELF *feito no Brasil* and the concept of pluri-versality, this paper has proposed a framework for teacher education that validates diverse linguistic practices and foregrounds epistemic resistance. This framework insists that English, when reclaimed through critical racial literacy, can become a language of solidarity, denunciation, and transformation. It can serve as a bridge between communities, at the same time that it allows for naming injustice, and imagining *otherwise.* The paper also demands that SLTE move beyond symbolic gestures toward structural change, preparing teachers to navigate the complexities of race, power, and language conscientiously.

Moreover, this work is ongoing. Coloniality is not a relic of the past; it is a living structure that adapts and persists. As such, antiracist language education must be dynamic, reflexive, and responsive to the evolving realities of learners and teachers alike. It must be rooted in local contexts while remaining attuned to global struggles for justice. The project of rethinking ELF is, ultimately, a project of reimagining the very foundations

BETWEEN GRAMMARS AND BODIES:
RETHINKING ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA THROUGH ANTIRACIST LANGUAGE
EDUCATION – FIORESE, John.

150

of language education, toward a future where all bodies, all voices, and all ways of knowing are recognized as legitimate and valuable.

In this spirit, the call to integrate racial literacy into ELF and SLTE is not merely academic, but ethical. It is a call to educators, researchers, and institutions to take responsibility for the role language plays in shaping our world. It points to a future where English language teaching is not a site of exclusion but a space of epistemic plurality, transcultural awareness, and social justice. It is a call to action, to solidarity, and to hope.

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BETWEEN GRAMMARS AND BODIES:
RETHINKING ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA THROUGH ANTIRACIST LANGUAGE
EDUCATION – FIORESE, John.

151

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BETWEEN GRAMMARS AND BODIES:
RETHINKING ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA THROUGH ANTIRACIST LANGUAGE
EDUCATION – FIORESE, John.

152

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A VYGOTSKIAN APPROACH TO ELF IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

UMA ABORDAGEM VYGOTSKIANA PARA O ILF NA SALA DE AULA DE INGLÊS

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ABSTRACT: Bridging the gap between academic research on English as a lingua franca (ELF) and English language teaching (ELT) has become a major challenge, especially since classroom English has increasingly been examined as a source of insight into complex phenomena such as second language acquisition (SLA) and deviations from standard norms in learners' use of English. Although applied research shows that teachers often adopt a more open attitude towards the emergence of ELF in authentic intercultural discourse, they still tend to resist changes concerning the legitimacy of learners' non-canonical use of English. Many teachers question whether it is truly possible to distinguish clearly between acceptable ELF features and errors that are simply part of the learning process. Furthermore, they often argue that incorporating ELF into classroom practice poses significant challenges for current assessment criteria. I argue that an integrated approach—combining Vygotsky's (1934/1986) sociocultural theory (SCT) with concept-based language instruction (C-BLI) (Lantolf; Poehner, 2014)—can help teachers support learners in conceptualising linguistic notions (e.g., lexicogrammatical categories such as case, number, gender, tense, mood, and aspect) in a scientific rather than intuitive way. This fosters a deeper understanding of language that goes beyond superficial rule-of-thumb knowledge. From this point of view, language awareness entails that students should understand how cognitive concepts are verbalised in similar or different ways through the lexicogrammar systems of their L1 and English.
Keywords: ELF. Sociocultural Theory. Concept-based Language Instruction.

RESUMO: Preencher a lacuna entre a pesquisa acadêmica sobre o inglês como língua franca (ILF) e o ensino da língua inglesa (ELI) tornou-se um desafio crescente. O inglês em sala de aula vem sendo analisado como fonte de conhecimento sobre fenômenos complexos, como a aquisição de segunda língua e os desvios das normas padrão no uso do idioma pelos alunos. Embora pesquisas indiquem que muitos professores adotem uma postura mais aberta em relação ao surgimento do ILF em contextos interculturais

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autênticos, ainda há resistência quanto à legitimidade do uso não canônico do inglês. Questiona-se se é possível distinguir claramente entre traços aceitáveis do ILF e erros típicos do processo de aprendizagem. Além disso, argumenta-se que incorporar o ILF à prática pedagógica desafia os critérios atuais de avaliação. Defendo que uma abordagem integrada, baseada na teoria sociocultural de Vygotsky (1934/1986) e no ensino de línguas baseado em conceitos (C-BLI) (Lantolf; Poehner, 2014), pode auxiliar os professores a apoiar os alunos na compreensão conceitual de noções linguísticas — como caso, número, gênero, tempo, modo e aspecto — de forma científica, não apenas intuitiva. Essa abordagem favorece uma compreensão mais profunda e consciente da linguagem, que transcende o conhecimento superficial. Assim, a consciência linguística implica que os aprendizes compreendam como os conceitos cognitivos se manifestam de maneira semelhante ou distinta nos sistemas lexicogramaticais de sua língua materna e do inglês. **Palavras-chave:** ELF. Teoria Sociocultural. Instrução de linguagem baseada em conceitos.

INTRODUCTION

The idea for this article emerged after a discussion with my MA students about two thought-provoking papers on English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), which I regularly use as introductory readings on the topic. Specifically, Swan's (2012) "ELF and EFL: Are they really different?", and Widdowson's (2013) "ELF and EFL: What's the difference? Comments on Michael Swan", both published in the *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*. My students and I were particularly intrigued by the following statement by Widdowson (p. 193, emphasis added), which raises a fundamental question for ELF scholars concerned with the pedagogical implications of the spread of English:

The teaching of English will always need to be pedagogically designed and the contexts of classrooms can never replicate contexts of use: they represent different realities. In this respect, ELF and EFL, however it is defined, will always be different. *The question is how these realities can be most effectively related*.

This paper aims to address this challenge by proposing a blended approach to teaching English as a school subject, one that may serve as a convergence point between two seemingly irreconcilable conceptions: English as an encoded, exonormative lexicogrammar system[2], and ELF as a variable, multilingual and multicultural emergent

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[2] This is the variety of English that Swan and Widdowson refer to as English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

language. I argue that a Vygotskian approach to second language development—grounded in sociocultural theory (SCT) and concept-based language instruction (C-BLI)—can help bring about the paradigm shift in English language teaching (ELT) that many ELF scholars advocate. In the following sections, I will begin by introducing Vygotsky's SCT and its contributions to the field of second language development. I will then explore the feasibility of integrating ELF into formal education through C-BLI. This will include a brief overview of two SCT-based pedagogical approaches: Systemic Theoretical Instruction (STI) and C-BLI. I will also present a Scheme of a Complete Orienting Basis of an Action (SCOBA) I developed as a conceptual mediational tool to support students in internalising tense–aspect combinations in English. Finally, I will discuss the role of Dynamic Assessment (DA) in meeting the requirements of ELF-aware language pedagogy.

1 SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY AND SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING/LEARNING

Lev Vygotsky (Orša, 1896–Moscow, 1934) was the pioneer of Sociocultural Theory (SCT), a theory of mind that emphasises the crucial role of the socio-historical context in shaping an individual's thinking and personality. As Poehner and Lantolf (2024, p. 3-4) explain:

Vygotsky reasoned that humans (adults) must be simultaneously animals and not animals. [...] He proposed that what makes us unique thinkers is human culture. [...] Most importantly, there is one feature that human cultures have developed that animals and young children lack - the ability to speak. Speaking (we include sign language of Deaf communities, as well as writing or what Vygotsky called, written speech) is the key to the formation of human thinking, or what is called in SCT, *higher psychological functions*; that is consciousness.

Furthermore, individual thinking emerges through inner speech, which originates from social speech and represents the highest achievement of human consciousness. In *Thought and Language*, a milestone of his psychological research, Vygotsky (1934/1986, p. 44) asserts that "the social factor [is] the decisive one in child development." He also refers to Piaget (Vygotsky, 1934/1986, p. 13), one of the first scholars to define development as a characteristic of the learner—specifically, the child:

Like many another great discovery, Piaget's idea is simple to the point of seeming self-evident. It had greatly been expressed in the words of J. J. Rousseau, which Piaget himself quoted, that a child is not a miniature adult and his mind not the mind of an adult on a small scale. Behind

this truth, for which Piaget provided experimental truth, stands another simple idea -the idea of evolution, which suffuses all of Piaget's studies with a brilliant light.

Drawing on Piaget (1969, p. 256, in Vygotsky, 1934/1986), Vygotsky acknowledges that the external environment—and by extension, the social context—plays a crucial role in shaping the child's psychology: "The influences to which adults subject the child do not imprint themselves upon the child as on a photographic plate; they are assimilated, i.e., 'deformed' by the living being who comes under their sway and they are incorporated into his own substance" (p. 19).

Activities carried out within a social context and mediated by cultural artifacts such as verbal language are a fundamental factor influencing individual development. Unlike Piaget, however, Vygotsky argued that "the psychological function of speech does not emerge suddenly from social speech; rather it passes through an egocentric phase in which its formal appearance is social but its functioning is increasingly psychological" (Lantolf; Thorne, 2006, p. 72). Lantolf and Thorne (2006) also note that, unlike Piaget—who claimed that egocentric speech tends to disappear as children become progressively socialised—Vygotsky believed that "if self-directed speech indeed had a cognitive action, it ought to increase in frequency as children engage in increasingly complex tasks" (p. 72). From a Vygotskian perspective, the child's inner speech consists of pure meaning, which is not yet formally organised. Only when it develops into encoded speech does it become social and externalised as private speech (Flavell, 1966)—that is, a form of intrapersonal communication used to regulate both mental and physical activity. Arievitch and Haenen (2005, p. 155–165) argue that: "Vygotsky's theory emerged out of the social and political context of the first decades of the 20th century and represented a new approach to psychology with tremendous promise." By overcoming the traditional dichotomy between biological and cultural factors, Vygotsky proposed a new psychological framework that integrates both dimensions, wherein development occurs primarily through social relationships and subsequently through mental processes such as *internalisation* (also known as *appropriation*). This refers to the process by which "humans gain control over natural mental functions by bringing externally formed mediating artifacts into thinking activity" (Lantolf; Thorne, 2006, p. 153). In turn, internalisation presupposes the inverse process of *externalisation*, through a simultaneous, integrated relationship in which the social context provides individuals

with semiotic and cultural material that they reorganise and reintegrate into that same context. According to Valsiner (1997, p. 243, in Lantolf; Thorne, 2006, p. 160), "through this process of externalization, immediate person-environment relationships are constantly being reorganized." The acquisition of verbal language is a case in point, effectively illustrating how the dual process of internalisation and externalisation operates. Vygotsky strongly emphasised the interdependence between language as a tool of social mediation and human experience, both of which play a fundamental role in the cognitive development of consciousness. As Sweeney (2023, p. 5) observes, verbal language is not merely "an external means of interacting with other people but also an internal tool for managing [one's] own higher mental functions such as attention, perception, inhibition, memory, and motivation." McCafferty (2020, p. 46) also notes that: "development first appears through social interaction and then psychologically through internalization, a transformative process, leading to the dynamic interaction of society and the individual." Thus, from the perspective of SCT, language is viewed as the primary mediational tool that enables individuals to interact and connect with both themselves and others. Indeed, for Vygotsky (1934/1986, p. 6-7)

> The primary function of speech is communication, social intercourse. When language was studied through analysis into elements, this function, too, was dissociated from the intellectual function of speech. The two were treated as though they were separate, if parallel, functions, without attention to their structural and developmental interrelation. Yet word meaning is a unit of both these functions of speech. That understanding between minds is impossible without some mediating expression is an axiom for scientific psychology. In the absence of a system of signs, linguistic or other, only the most primitive and limited type of communication is possible.

However, as Bier (2015, p. 72) explains, language serves not only a social function but also a psychological one: "as a psychological tool, [...] it enables cognitive and metacognitive interaction with one's self: it helps intramental processes which sort, organize and categorize one's individual thoughts and ideas." Consequently, the verbal language acquired by the child becomes an integral part of their thinking and enables them to formulate ideas. Briefly, Vygotsky (1997, p. 88) referred to his research methodology as the "genetic method", as it investigates the genesis of human mental behaviour and higher cognitive functions within a historical context in which the development of consciousness is mediated by cultural affordances, such as "numbers, charts, figures, art, music, and the most powerful and pervasive artifact of all, language"

(Lantolf; Thorne, 2006, p. 26). Given the cultural-historical nature of language—which mediates human consciousness across diverse social contexts—it follows that all natural languages are fundamentally unique and dynamic, as they are shaped by individually and socially constructed *weltanschauungen* (worldviews). By the same token, if observed through the prism of SCT, the natural emergence of ELF as a variable contact language in multilingual and transcultural contexts (e.g., online communication in the age of Globalisation) should be seen as an artifact through which international speakers co-construct a mediational tool. In this way, English is appropriated by its users as they attempt to communicate and simultaneously express their distinct linguacultural identities. As Karimi-Aghdam and Compernolle (2023) observe, this has significant implications for how we conceptualise second language development, which cannot simply be reduced to learning new vocabulary and a set of structure-based rules of thumb:

> Because languages vary from phonology, to lexicogrammar, to pragmatics, to discourse, and so on, so too do the modes of linguistically mediated thinking that have developed from one culture to the next. Consequently, learning an additional language is not simply a matter of liking new words, grammar, pragmatics, and so forth into existing modes of thinking: learning a new language entails learning to think through a new multi-semiotic system that has evolved along a different cultural-historical timeline. (p. 4)

Karimi-Aghdam and Compernolle's view of second language development reveals compelling parallels with Whorf's (1956) principle of linguistic relativity and Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) theory of conceptual metaphor. However, to prevent possible misunderstanding, it is important to clarify what Karimi-Aghdam and Compernolle mean by the phrase "learning to think *through* a new multi-semiotic system" (emphasis added), in the previous quotation, as opposed to *in* a new multi-semiotic system. Essentially, the authors are not suggesting that second language learning involves slavishly repeating ready-made sentences or mimicking an alien—albeit idealised—native-speaker *weltanschauung* and behaviour. Rather, they argue that second language internalisation (in this case, English) occurs through what Vygotsky calls linguistic *imitation*—a goal-oriented and cognitively motivated process that relies on the brain's capacity to reproduce complex verbal actions, identify their components, and recombine them to produce novel patterns and utterances. As Ohta (2001, cited in Lantolf; Thorne, 2006, p. 171) observes, learners typically "produce imitations that are transformative"—that is,

they do not reproduce language models verbatim. This supports the idea that, although English syllabi and teaching materials are generally designed around Standard English (SE) models, learners naturally tend to deviate from them. This may be primarily attributed to the influence of the learner's native language, which functions as a primary mediational tool in second language acquisition (SLA). Indeed, SLA is a dynamic process in which the learner's L1 and personal *weltanschauung* do not hinder English learning; rather, they contribute to the gradual internalisation and externalisation of the L2 as an additional linguistic artifact. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that linguistic variability is inherent to SLA and manifests in two main ways: a) on the one hand, it reflects how the learner's L2 competence gradually evolves toward higher levels of complexity, enabling them to engage in more demanding communicative activities; b) on the other hand, it demonstrates that the learner's appropriation—or, in Widdowson's (1994) terms, *ownership*—of English naturally emerges from their communicative motivation and unique (re)construction of the L2 in contact situations[3]. Garrett (2004, p. 66) argues that "the study of language contact and contact languages calls for theories and methods that can cope with variability and indeterminacy of specific forms as well as heterogeneity and dynamism in higher level linguistic and cultural systems". Notably, Vygotsky (1934/1986) viewed variability in learning as a natural and essential outcome of social and cultural interaction. Learning is inherently cultural, and social mediation shapes how individuals—particularly in language acquisition—negotiate meaning and use language as a tool for learning. Within the ecosystem of the English classroom, the complementary relationship between teacher and learner—what Vygotsky (1978) refers to as *obuchenie*—enables individual differences to emerge as expressions of each student's cognitive development. From an SCT perspective, the activation of SLA through schooling should primarily focus on practice (e.g., task-based language teaching, TBLT) and at the same time, as Poehner and Lantolf (2024, p. 17) point out, on: "well-organized systematic instruction that presents learners with conceptual knowledge of the language, especially of complex and subtle features that are difficult to appropriate from immersion context outside or inside classroom." As will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections, according to Concept-Based Language Instruction (C-BLI) principles (Lantolf; Thorne, 2006; Poehner; Lantolf, 2024), instruction aims to enhance learners' deeper

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[3] For further discussion on language construction and language variability, see Tomasello (1999); Heine; Kuteva (2005); Kohn (2011); and Grazzi (2018).

awareness of second language structures (in this case, English), going beyond superficial "rules of thumb." Through explicit instruction, learners are guided to conceptualise linguistic notions (such as lexicogrammatical categories like case, number, gender, tense, mood, and aspect) in a scientific rather than intuitive way. This may also involve a comparative study of the L1 and L2, encouraging students to identify similarities and differences between the two languages and, in doing so, become aware of how discourse is shaped and meaning negotiated. An important corollary of this systematic metalinguistic activity—referred to by Swain (2006) as *languaging*—is that studying English, or any second language, enables learners to develop a deeper awareness of their native tongue.

In the remainder of this article, I will elaborate on the central topic of how C-BLI can inform ELF studies, particularly in relation to the highly debated issue of addressing learners' non-canonical forms of English, and the pedagogical implications for assessing learners' competencies in an ELF-aware classroom.

2 THE INTEGRATION OF ELF AND C-BLI IN SCHOOLING

Applying Vygotsky's genetic method in second language education presupposes conceiving of the classroom as an artificial environment, a laboratory where students experiment with communication through a new verbal artifact, English, supported by their teachers, peers[4], and available tools (e.g., textbooks, computers, the Internet, AI, etc.). Similarly, Widdowson (2003, p. 113) reflects on the nature of the subject English and points out that:

> We need to recognize that the classroom is a social construct and as such, as any other, has its contexts and purposes, its own legitimate reality. Naturally, like any other social construct, it is dynamic, subject to variation and change […] Nevertheless, locally different though classrooms are bound to be, they share the common feature that *makes* them all classrooms, namely that they are the site for contrived contexts designed to achieve a pedagogic purpose. […]

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[4] With regard to the teacher's supporting role—namely, the expert figure who assists and provides scaffolding to the class—Vygotsky (1978, p. 86) introduced the seminal concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which he defined as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers." The ZPD can be understood as a relational or affective zone rather than a physical space. Goldstein (1999) characterises it as a socially mediated space, shaped by relationships involving sensitivity and trust. In the classroom, this space is co-constructed through interactions among students and between students and their teacher, as they participate in supportive activities that foster learner confidence and positive emotions. The term *proximal* refers to time—that is, to the anticipated next steps in the learner's developmental trajectory.

As far as the teaching of English is concerned, or the teaching of any language, we need to consider what language is appropriate for the classroom on its own contextual terms and for its own purposes.

Today, however, the real challenge for English language teaching (ELT) lies in the unprecedented and rapid changes English has undergone in recent decades, above all as a consequence of Globalisation (Grazzi, 2018b), a complex economic, political, scientific, technological, and cultural phenomenon made possible by the spread of English as the primary linguistic mediational tool for international communication. Although, from a diachronic perspective, the century-long history of English demonstrates that change and variability are intrinsic to the language (e.g., see Jenkins, 2015), what makes the current process unique—synchronically—is above all the speed and creativity of the non-canonical features that are emerging, and the fact that these changes are the natural outcome of the legitimate appropriation and use of the language "among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option" (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 7). Hence, alongside the well-established pedagogical tradition of adopting a monolithic SE model in language education, there exists the reality of an emergent, plurilithic (Pennycook, 2009), and transnational language that is unstable, non-codifiable, and not teachable in the traditional sense.[5] In light of the above, it seems reasonable to conclude that, rather than disregarding the reality of ELF altogether, a reconceptualisation of ELT is advisable, primarily to promote ELF-informed pedagogy as a means of raising teachers' and learners' awareness of the variable ways in which English is used today (e.g., Bayyurt; Sifakis, 2015; Seidlhofer, 2015; Vettorel, 2015). One way this could be achieved, Seidlhofer (2015, p. 26) suggests, is by ensuring that "learners should be made aware of what they are doing. This involves them in relating the English they are learning to the experience of their own language." In other words, Seidlhofer emphasises the importance of students' guided metalinguistic reflection on the use of their L1 and English—starting with social practice (i.e., the pragmatic use of English to carry out communicative activities within the language syllabus) and progressing toward a deeper theoretical understanding of L2 lexicogrammar and discourse systems. From a Vygotskian perspective, this position suggests a significant convergence between ELF-informed pedagogy (e.g., see Cavalheiro,

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[5] Jenkins (2015b), for instance, describes ELF as a *glocal* process (Robertson, 1999), that is, a variable, context-bound *multilingua franca*.

2018; Grazzi, 2018b) and SLA, provided that a comparative reflection on the interconnections between learners' use of English and their L1 is conducted. This comparative approach, I suggest, should be integrated into schooling, meaning that students' L1 should not be excluded from the L2 teaching and learning process. In fact, the student's L1 should not be viewed solely as a potential source of negative transfer and error (e.g., see Corder, 1981; Grazzi, 2020; Odlin, 1989; Selinker, 1972), but rather, as previously noted, as a mediational tool crucial to L2 development. From the perspective of SCT, human verbal language is viewed both as a symbolic mediator of meaning and as a tool for regulating cognitive activity. Therefore, learning a new language: "is about acquiring new conceptual knowledge and/or modifying already existing knowledge as a way of re-mediating one's interaction with the world and with one's own psychological functioning" (Lantolf; Thorne, 2006, p. 5). For this reason, "The reliance on the L1 [is] not necessarily the result of gaps in the learners' L2 knowledge or ability to access this knowledge, but represent[s] the fact that individuals have a much closer psychological link with their L1 as a mediating artifact than they do with their L2" (Lantolf; Thorne, 2006, p. 295). Hence, the emergence of ELF can be understood as an epiphenomenon that illustrates how learners re-mediate and internalise English through social practice. Widdowson (2013, p. 192, emphasis added) offers a particularly insightful observation in this regard:

> Users make strategic use of the linguistic resources at their disposal, "accommodate, innovate and so on" "to serve their communicative purposes." And this, of course, provides them with the motivation and capability for further learning as and when occasion requires – *learning that is certainly not determined by teaching*. If they have learned somehow to do this, *in spite of the way they have been taught*, does this not at least raise the possibility that we might consider an approach to teaching that goes along with the natural learning/using process rather than against it?

Unlike Vygotsky, however, Widdowson appears to assume that teaching and learning are independent processes rather than interconnected through *obuchenie*. Widdowson (2003, p. 115) argues that learners possess a natural "capability" to develop their own English, regardless of the pedagogical approach adopted. In my view, this position may leave teachers—even those open to ELF—uncertain about their role, which

appears marginal in second language education. Without a solid theoretical framework for reshaping the subject of English in light of ELF studies, most language teachers may be reluctant to take responsibility for what appear to be random and unstructured pedagogical changes. It is therefore not surprising that teachers typically choose more conventional and routine practices (e.g., see Jenkins, 2007; Grazzi, 2013). It is also important to consider that school teachers, in their institutional role, are required to comply with the national curriculum and standardised assessment tests. As a result, their individual freedom of choice is constrained by the institutional conditions under which they must perform their duties. In this context, the idea that teachers could independently initiate a radical shift in ELT seems unrealistic, especially since educational systems and civil servants typically function as transmitters of dominant ideologies. If, instead, we view the roles of learners and teachers through the lens of *obuchenie*, their complementary functions can be reconceptualised as part of the same dialectical process. Within the ecosystem of the English classroom (van Lier, 2004), teachers act as qualified adult mediators, interacting with students through symbolic mediational tools (e.g., language) and material tools (e.g., audiovisual aids, the Internet, etc.) within a ZPD. Their aim is to create conditions for mediated learning experiences (MLEs) to occur (Kozulin, 2024). In addition, Lantolf and Poehner (2014, p. 11-13) observe that

For Vygotsky, education, when properly organized, can indeed alter our conceptual systems in profitable ways. On this view, education is not merely a matter of acquiring new knowledge (i.e., learning); rather it is a new process of development that results in new ways of conceptualizing the world. [...] The function of educational activity is to modify the understanding students have upon entering the school and change them so they align with the best scientific knowledge available at any given time in human history.

These pedagogical principles, I argue, may offer a way to redefine the pedagogical paradigm of the subject English, particularly in light of its status as an international language. In the same vein, Lantolf and Poehner (2014, p. 55) propose what they consider today's pedagogical imperative:

Education is a primary macro cultural environment where systematic development ought to occur through intentional and well-organized instruction (i.e., *obuchenie*). The test of the theory therefore resides not in its capacity to generate a priori predictions but in its ability to fulfill the responsibility required of a praxis-based theory of developmental education.

As will be discussed later in this article, this point is particularly relevant to C-BLI. The underlying assumption is that, through explicit instruction and the use of appropriate mediational affordances within a ZPD, learners can focus on language concepts and thereby strengthen SLA. Vygotsky's SCT has inspired several scholars, including Gal'perin, who developed a pedagogical framework known as Systemic Theoretical Instruction (STI) (e.g., see Engeness, 2021; Esteve et al., 2021; Gal'perin, 1967, 1970, 1979, 1989, 1992). A synopsis of this approach and its contribution to the development of C-BLI will be the focus of the next section.

3 FROM GAL'PERIN'S SYSTEMIC THEORETICAL INSTRUCTION (STI) TO CONCEPT-BASED LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION (C-BLI)

3.1 NOTES ON SYSTEMIC THEORETICAL INSTRUCTION (STI)

Gal'perin developed his theoretical framework based on Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (SCT). In particular, he explored the concepts of "cultural tools, mediation, and internalisation by scrutinising the ways in which the specifically human mental activity is developed" (Engeness, 2021, p. xxvi). This was made possible through his research on psychological functions, "in the sequential order of perception, memory and thinking. These predominant functions affect the development and organisation of human consciousness" (p. xliv-xlv). Moreover, Gal'perin indicates that "the hierarchical organisation of psychological functions can be developed only in humans, and it is inherently connected to the human use of cultural means." (p. xlv) Gal'perin concludes that "higher psychological functions are nothing else but internal operations mediated by forms of communication, and higher psychological functions are developed in the process of mediated social communication during the external activities of humans" (p. xlv). He adopted the so-called *spiral model*, which "indicates students' increasing internalisation of an action while passing through a sequence of levels in mastering a given task" (p. xxvi). Arievitch and Haenen (2005, cited in Engeness, 2021, p. xxvi) observe that the spiral model demonstrates how "the learning process moves forward as gradual improvements

in the quality of action, which can be observed in the steadily growing ability of the learner to orient him or herself in the task and propel him or herself forward while mastering this task." Gal'perin's learning theory consists of three main components: *orienting*, *executive*, and *controlling*:

> The orienting part of a learning activity was considered by Gal'perin a 'managing device' whereas the executive part was seen as a 'working device' transferring the activity from the external plane to the internal. For Galperin, the transformation of the learning activity was described by the measure of its acquisition by learners engaged in the activity i.e. when transferred from the social external to the internal plane. (Engeness, 2021, p. 108)

The third component of learning concerns "controlling the action's execution according to the created plan" (p. x). According to Gal'perin, "learning and development involve engaging in social experience" (p. 110). Like Vygotsky, he believed that it was essential for the teacher to provide guidance to the learner and to foster collaboration between them. Moreover, according to Gal'perin (Engeness, 2021), teachers should aim to enable learners to acquire knowledge that can be applied across multiple contexts. Learning, therefore, should go beyond the mechanical application of rules of thumb and instead provide a solid foundation enabling learners to apply what they have learned in varied, real-world contexts.

3.1.1 Orientation: OBAs and SCOBAs

The orienting phase of Gal'perin's model is particularly significant. It involves the learner's activities in developing mental actions, which are based on a "*generalised scheme of the action*" itself (Engeness, 2021, p. ix). The Orienting Basis of an Action (OBA) is a structural component that provides the necessary conditions, understanding, and guidance for a learner to successfully complete a task. It includes an anticipated representation of the task, a specific orientation system (e.g., rules, signs, or models) required to complete it, and a foundational action plan, ultimately enabling the learner to develop new concepts and mental abilities by internalising external activity. In essence, the OBA serves as a cognitive blueprint and guidance system, enabling the learner to understand, plan, and execute a new action, transitioning from external activity to internal mental processes. In second language use, the effectiveness of the OBA directly affects the quality of verbal action during communicative tasks. OBAs can be generalised and adapted to address new tasks across diverse contexts. More importantly, Engeness (2021, p. ix) notes:

The *orienting scheme can be created by the teacher* and offered to learners for them to use. By using this scheme, learners are able to solve various tasks, and the process creates a specific attitude toward learning: mastering the target concept becomes a means for achieving the personal success of each individual learner. The orienting scheme can also be *constructed by learners under the guidance of a teacher*. Moving step-by-step under the guidance of a teacher, learners identify the characteristic features of the target concept, and in doing so, create a complete scheme of the orienting basis of the action. When the scheme of the orienting basis has been created, it can be applied by learners to solve various problems.

As will be shown in section 3.2.1, the Scheme of a Complete Orienting Basis of an Action (SCOBA) is a useful mediational learning tool (e.g., flashcards, flowcharts, etc.) that enables students to visualise L2 lexicogrammatical structures through a detailed graphic model or set of instructions designed to guide them in performing a new action. SCOBAs outline the steps and essential features required to successfully complete a task, enabling learners to transform it into a mental OBA—i.e., an internalised cognitive scheme that supports independent performance in future communicative actions.

In conclusion, Gal'perin's STI aimed to develop a pedagogical model that would "explain the process of internalization (i.e., movement from inter- to intra-psychological functioning) that occurs in the development of mental functions in any educational domain" (Poehner; Lantolf, 2024, p. 18). Due to space constraints, a more detailed description will not be provided here[6]. Suffice it to say that STI provided the foundational framework later adapted by Lantolf and his collaborators (e.g., Poehner; Lantolf, 2005; Lantolf; Thorne, 2006; Lantolf; Poehner, 2014; Lantolf et al., 2020; Poehner; Lantolf, 2024) and applied to SLA as Concept-Based Language Instruction (C-BLI). This approach to second language development emphasises systematic knowledge underpinning meaning-based language theories, in contrast to the early forms of Gal'perin's model, which focused primarily on structure. The core components of C-BLI are introduced in the following section.

3.2 NOTES ON CONCEPT-BASED LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION (C-BLI)

C-BLI is "an approach to foreign language instruction that proposes the teaching and learning of linguistic concepts (such as mood, tense, aspect, genre, indexicality, irony) as the base to develop control and awareness over [foreign language] FL performance"

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[6] For a comprehensive overview of Gal'perin's Systemic Theoretical Instruction (STI), see Engeness (2021).

(Fernandez, 2022, p. 2). It is "a systematic approach to language instruction grounded in principles of SCT as laid down by Vygotsky and refined by later generations of SCT researchers, including most importantly Gal'perin" (Lantolf *et al.*, 2020, p. 327).

For Vygotsky, "schooling is where scientific, or theoretical, concepts guide development. It brings into consciousness abilities and knowledge internalized in a non-reflective way in the everyday world (i.e., spontaneous concepts)" (Lantolf; Thorne, 2006, p. 292). Therefore, within the context of the intact classroom (i.e., a full group of students treated as a single unit for implementing C-BLI), "SCT and applied cognitive linguistics develop approaches to instruction that are conceptually based" (Lantolf; Thorne, 2006, p. 303). With respect to the main topic of this article, we may assume that C-BLI enables learners to develop a deeper understanding of—and greater control over— the English subject. This cognitive teaching–learning model is grounded in praxis and in the learner's conceptual understanding of the L2 lexicogrammatical system, moving beyond the study of cursory (and sometimes inaccurate) rules of thumb often found in textbooks. Below is a representative list of key conceptual areas that form the focus of verbal cognition (i.e., the overt and covert verbalisation of explicit linguistic knowledge aimed at supporting the internalisation process), as learners attempt to organise the new language to mediate meaning and perform a range of communicative tasks: spatial relationships; quantity; size; shape; characteristics (e.g., old/new, hot/cold); textures (e.g., smooth, rough); colours; temporal elements; emotional states; negation. As indicated in Sections 1 and 2, a comparative study of how the learner's L1 and English mediate concepts—whether similarly or differently—is advisable. I contend that this approach can shed light on how each student activates their process of L2 internalisation and externalisation through classroom activities, and, more importantly, on the emergence of non-canonical uses of English, which may offer multiple insights into: a) the dynamic assessment (DA; Lantolf; Poehner, 2014) of the learner's current level of competence and their potential progress within the ZPD; b) the student's implementation of learning and communicative strategies; and c) the unique ways in which each learner appropriates and reshapes English (a process that Kohn [2011, p. 80] calls "developing *My English*") to mediate their languacultural identity through variable—yet legitimate—forms of discourse. In short, I propose that by reflecting on learners' pragmatic use of English and conducting a comparative analysis of the interaction between their L1 and L2, teachers may a) make informed decisions about which deviations from standard norms require corrective

feedback; b) guide students to reflect on "how language forms create possibilities for expressing meaning" (Lantolf; Poehner, 2014, p. 223); c) incorporate language variability into the English curriculum; d) connect classroom instruction to the reality of ELF, especially when students engage in authentic international communicative tasks (e.g., web-mediated telecollaboration projects); e) enhance learners' ELF-awareness. In this sense, learners should "exploit their linguistic resources strategically and knowingly" (Seidlhofer, 2015, p. 27); and f) enhance learners' ELF-awareness.

I conclude this brief overview of C-BLI by quoting Lantolf (2006, p. 88), who states:

> Conceptual understanding becomes paramount not only with regard to metaphors, schema, lexical networks and the like, but also with regard to the conceptual meaning imparted by the grammatical feature of a language. (…) Rich points between different languacultures become the focus of our pedagogical attention as we seek to help students recognize, cope with and use them as the means for developing new ways of understanding reality.

3.2.1 Tense-aspect combinations in English: A comparative approach

This section presents an example of a SCOBA on tense–aspect combinations in English, which teachers can use in the language classroom. More specifically, it illustrates how the combination of perfective and imperfective verbal aspects with tense may be conceptualised in English. The SCOBA presented here (Figure 1) is based on Negueruela-Azarola's (2003, in Lantolf; Thorne, 2006, p. 311) doctoral research, which included the development of a SCOBA on verbal aspect and tense in Spanish. The aim was to develop a similar SCOBA for British English, with the important caveat that it cannot be all-encompassing. As Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999, p. 175) observe:

> [...] teachers need to help learners understand how the English tense-aspect-modality system works in relation to different discourse types and to realize that it operates differently in different languages; that is, the discourse conventions of learners' native language tense-aspect-modality system will likely not transfer positively to English. [...] The way past time frames are conventionalized in English is not always obvious to nonnative speakers because boundaries of objective time and tense are conventionalized differently within discourse frames in different cultures.

Figure 1. Perfective/imperfective tense-aspect combinations in British English
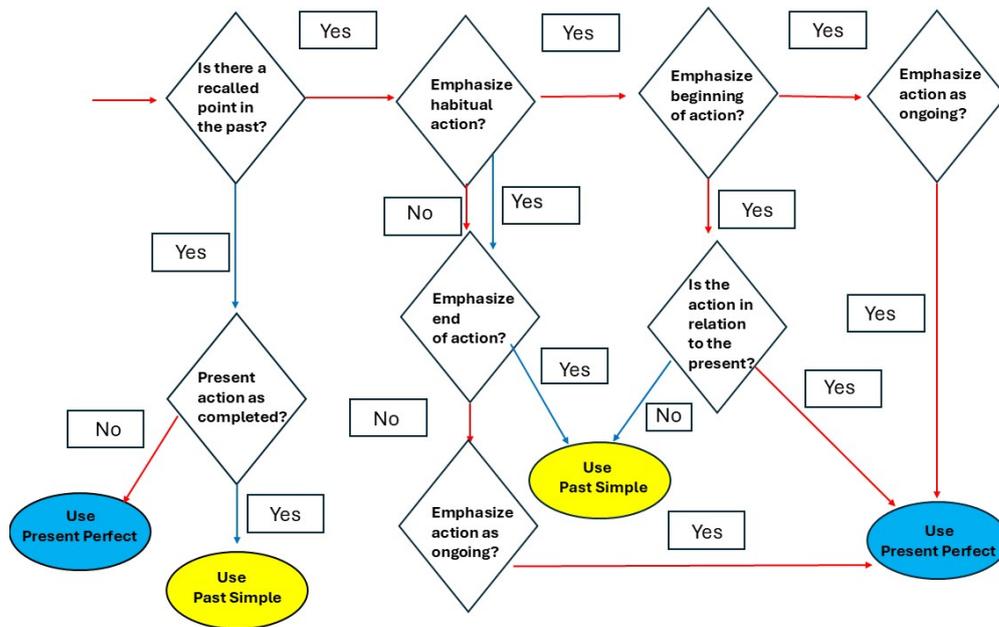
Following Negueruela-Azarola, the implementation of this SCOBA should be preceded by a class discussion on the concept of perfective and imperfective verbal aspect. Once the SCOBA has been introduced, students should use it as an orientation tool while engaging in a series of purposefully designed language activities. The ultimate goal of using this SCOBA is to help learners internalise the information it conveys, enabling them to perform language tasks independently.

The focus on perfective and imperfective verbal aspect was chosen due to the challenges this concept presents for Italian learners. As noted in a previous publication (Grazzi, 2018, p. 431–432), a common deviation from SE norms among Italian learners— even at advanced proficiency levels—is the use of the present perfect tense in perfective constructions, where the simple past would normally be expected. The following example was taken from an individual research project conducted during the 2014–15 school year, titled *Intercultural Collaboration: Italy–Finland*:

-   Italian high-school student: *I've been to Canada last year with an exchange program and I studied there for 5 months.*

The English present perfect tense and the Italian *passato prossimo* have similar constructions:

- English: Subject + Perfect auxiliary (*have/has*) + lexical verb (-ed participle)

- Italian: (Subject) + Perfect auxiliary (AVERE/ESSERE) + lexical verb (past participle)

While in SE the present perfect is associated with the imperfective aspect, the Italian *passato prossimo* is typically associated with both perfective and imperfective aspects.

This cross-linguistic transfer was likely caused by the superficial structural similarity between the two tense forms. In any case, this did not appear to affect mutual comprehensibility during the online interaction between the Italian and Finnish students, likely because the adverbial phrase *last year* specifies a point in time preceding the moment of communication. Therefore, from an ELF perspective, the Italian student's non-canonical use of English was pragmatically effective within the authentic communicative context of network-based ELT, despite not conforming to standard grammatical norms. This, I argue, may offer English teachers a general operational guideline for addressing learners' deviations from standardised norms, based on a pragmatic evaluation of the performative potential of ELF. Particularly when learners engage in authentic communicative tasks in international contexts (e.g., online interactions) the emergence of ELF forms should be accepted, as long as they do not hinder mutual comprehensibility. Nevertheless, since these activities take place within the school context, a guided reflection on learner performance (i.e., on praxis and variability, in Vygotskian terms) should be conducted, focusing on the differences and similarities between the ways in which the learner's emergent use of English and Standard English express cognitive concepts (e.g., tense–aspect combinations, as shown above). For this purpose, SCOBAs can be a valuable resource, as they mediate "learners' reflection on the L2 [and] may improve L2 acquisition. [...] Through saying and reflecting on what was said, new language is constructed" (Swain 2000, p. 113). In short, I suggest that learner performance constitutes the link between the SE model in ELT and the reality of ELF as an emergent contact language. This dynamic relationship unfolds within the ecosystem of the English classroom, where *obuchenie*—the collaborative interaction between teacher and learner—supports cognitive development. As demonstrated, C-BLI can significantly contribute to this aim, as it focuses on developing conceptual understanding of language by systematically teaching meaning-based categories rather than concentrating solely on grammatical structures. More importantly, this implies that learners gradually develop independent control over language by transforming external support into internal cognitive processes. As a result, the individual learner appropriates English, transforming it into an additional mediational tool through which their languacultural identity is expressed, and the language is reshaped to suit their communicative needs. This suggests that variability holds intrinsic value in SLA, and that teachers should align assessment criteria with learning goals, focusing on learners' performance qualities. From this

perspective, Dynamic Assessment (DA) allows teachers to elicit learners' potential to improve and develop competencies within the ZPD, as discussed in Section 3.2. I argue that assessment should be process-oriented—focused on the learner's expected development—rather than retrospective, limited to a static measurement of knowledge acquired up to a given point (typically via standardised testing). "In a DA framework […] instruction and assessment interact as a seamless, dialectical process to simultaneously diagnose and promote learner development" (Lantolf; Poehner, 2014, p. 6). DA is indeed a fundamental component of C-BLI and should be systematically integrated into classroom practice as the teaching–learning process unfolds. Finally, with regard to raising students' ELF-awareness, I suggest that through C-BLI and DA, both teachers and learners can reflect on non-canonical uses of English and realise: a) how learners verbalise lexicogrammatical categories (e.g., case, number, gender, tense, mood, and aspect) while engaging in communicative classroom activities; and b) how learner performance can be improved through teacher and peer feedback within the ZPD.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this article has argued that an integrated approach to ELT—combining ELF studies, Sociocultural Theory (SCT), and Concept-Based Language Instruction (C-BLI)—may offer L2 practitioners and teachers a reliable and promising methodological framework, grounded in the following components:

a. A theoretically informed perspective on cognition and an evolutionary understanding of ELF as a human artifact that mediates social practice in international contexts.

b. A conceptualisation of L2 development that acknowledges the fundamental role of learners' L1 languacultural background as a mediational resource.

c. A cognitive model grounded in praxis and in learners' conceptual understanding of the L2 lexicogrammatical system, going beyond superficial rules of thumb.

d. The dialectical process of second language teaching–learning (*obuchenie*), situated within a Vygotskian Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

e. The use of Dynamic Assessment (DA) to evaluate learners' L2 performance, with the aim "to promote learner development, not merely to describe what occurs during a single interaction" (Lantolf; Poehner, 2014, p. 203).

As a final remark, I suggest that the integrated approach outlined in this article may also offer a promising opportunity to enhance the effectiveness of Second Language Teacher

Education (SLTE). Following Johnson and Golombek (2011, p. 2), SLTE is grounded in scientific concepts related to human cognition and the role of language as a mediational tool, encouraging teachers to "move beyond their everyday experiences toward more theoretically and pedagogically sound instructional practices."

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MULTILINGUAL QUESTIONING PRACTICES IN EMI UNIVERSITIES: INSIGHTS FROM THE TURKISH CONTEXT

PRÁTICAS DE QUESTIONAMENTO MULTILÍNGUE EM UNIVERSIDADES EMI: PERSPECTIVAS DO CONTEXTO TURCO

Selin Aleyna Gül[1]
Yasemin Bayyurt[2]

ABSTRACT: The rise of English-medium Instruction (EMI) has been evident in many countries. This study investigates questioning practices in classroom interaction at an EMI foundation university. The data gathered from classroom observations (i.e., in electrical and electronics engineering and computer engineering courses), stimulated recall (SR) sessions with two content instructors, and semi-structured interviews with undergraduate students revealed how interaction unfolds in a multilingual English-medium instruction (EMI) classroom setting in higher education (HE). The classroom data were transcribed using Conversation Analysis (CA), focusing on multimodality (Jefferson, 2004; Mondada, 2018). The SR sessions and semi-structured interviews were transcribed and coded employing Strauss and Corbin's (1990, p. 61) coding scheme in MAXQDA (MAX Qualitative Data Analysis). Based on questioning practices in classroom observations, the relationship among the question types of three categories, namely, form (i.e., closed and open-ended), content (i.e., facts, reason-explanation, opinion), and purpose (i.e., referential, display, rhetorical), was presented with visual and statistical data (Dalton-Puffer, 2006; Vivekmetakorn; Thamma, 2015). The findings revealed differences between the questioning practices of lecturers whose first languages differed. Both lecturers displayed translanguaging practices during classroom observations to facilitate meaning-making and create content knowledge, using instructional strategies. Student-initiated questions and undergraduate students' insights about the EMI setting were also analyzed. The study's findings reveal that translanguaging served not only as a linguistic resource but also as a pedagogical strategy, enabling clarification of complex engineering concepts and supporting student engagement. These findings have implications for a deeper understanding of face-to-face EMI classroom interaction, with a particular focus on the

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MULTILINGUAL QUESTIONING PRACTICES IN EMI UNIVERSITIES: INSIGHTS FROM THE
TURKISH CONTEXT: GÜL, Selin Aleyna; BAYYURT, Yasemin.

178

translanguaging and questioning practices of instructors and undergraduate engineering students.

Keywords: English medium instruction, Multimodal conversation analysis, Questioning Practices, Translanguaging

RESUMO: A ascensão do Ensino em Inglês (EMI) tem sido evidente em muitos países. Este estudo investiga práticas de questionamento na interação em sala de aula em uma universidade de fundação EMI. Os dados coletados a partir de observações em sala de aula (ou seja, em cursos de engenharia elétrica e eletrônica e engenharia da computação), sessões de recordação estimulada (RE) com dois instrutores de conteúdo e entrevistas semiestruturadas com alunos de graduação revelaram como a interação se desenvolve em um ambiente de sala de aula multilíngue de ensino em inglês (EMI) no ensino superior (ES). Os dados da sala de aula foram transcritos usando Análise de Conversação (AC), com foco na multimodalidade (Jefforson, 2004; Mondada, 2018). As sessões de RE e as entrevistas semiestruturadas foram transcritas e codificadas empregando o esquema de codificação de Strauss e Corbin (1990, p. 61) no MAXQDA (Análise Qualitativa de Dados MAX). Com base em práticas de questionamento em observações de sala de aula, a relação entre os tipos de perguntas de três categorias, a saber, forma (i.e., fechada e aberta), conteúdo (i.e., fatos, razão-explicação, opinião) e propósito (i.e., referencial, exibição, retórica), foi apresentada com dados visuais e estatísticos (Dalton-Puffer, 2006; Vivekmetakorn; Thamma, 2015). Os resultados revelaram diferenças entre as práticas de questionamento de professores cujas primeiras línguas eram diferentes. Ambos os professores exibiram práticas de translinguagem durante as observações de sala de aula para facilitar a construção de significado e criar conhecimento de conteúdo, usando estratégias instrucionais. Perguntas iniciadas pelos alunos e insights de alunos de graduação sobre o ambiente EMI também foram analisados. Os resultados do estudo revelam que a translinguagem serviu não apenas como um recurso linguístico, mas também como uma estratégia pedagógica, permitindo o esclarecimento de conceitos complexos de engenharia e apoiando o engajamento dos alunos. Essas descobertas têm implicações para uma compreensão mais profunda da interação presencial em sala de aula de EMI, com foco particular nas práticas de translinguagem e questionamento de instrutores e alunos de graduação em engenharia.

Palavras-chave: Ensino em inglês, Análise de conversação multimodal, Práticas de questionamento, Translanguaging

INTRODUCTION

The use of English in education has been evident for years in many countries, including Türkiye. English-medium Instruction (EMI) has been on the rise recently, and this expansion was described as "mushrooming" by Lasagabaster and Doiz (2022). Using English in tertiary-level education in countries where English is neither the official language nor the primary language often results in bilingual or multilingual interactions.

The occurrences where students and instructors use languages other than English in EMI classrooms are not uncommon (Genç et al., 2023; Ataş, 2023; Calvo et al., 2022).

Despite the growing use of English in higher education, how languages other than English function in EMI classrooms remains underexplored—especially in relation to classroom questioning practices. While existing research has significantly contributed to our understanding of questioning through the lens of teachers' perspectives (Aguilar, 2015), students have also been the subject of studies (Zhunussova et al., 2023; Corrales et al., 2016), and expanding this focus to include students' views can enrich and deepen the overall picture of classroom interaction (Doiz; Lasagabaster, 2023; Genç; Yüksel, 2021). As interaction unfolds in an EMI context, several components of the classroom context are worth exploring. The study is motivated by a growing interest in translanguaging practices within EMI context with a focus on questioning practices of both instructors and students.

1 THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study is a multilayered investigation of questioning practices of both students and lecturers in the English-medium instruction (EMI) context in a foundation university. The first purpose of the study is to examine the dynamics of EMI interaction by observing and recording an authentic face-to-face (F2F) EMI classroom context. The research targets explicitly the interactions between students and lecturers, as well as among students themselves, with a focus on understanding these interactions, the questioning techniques employed, and the contexts in which they occur.

The following key point is to take a closer look at how the interaction among classroom stakeholders unfolds, the types of questioning practices implemented, and the language mediums involved. Lastly, the study aims to gain insights into the participants' perspectives on their multilingual and multimodal questioning practices. The use of data collection tools designed to capture their perspectives provides greater detail, helping to enhance the emic perspective in the research.

To provide a comprehensive understanding, the study incorporates video recordings of classroom interactions, along with two other data sources: semi-structured interviews with undergraduate students and stimulated recall (SR) sessions with content lecturers. This approach allows participants to share their insights on the EMI classroom

MULTILINGUAL QUESTIONING PRACTICES IN EMI UNIVERSITIES: INSIGHTS FROM THE TURKISH CONTEXT: GÜL, Selin Aleyna; BAYYURT, Yasemin.

180

dynamics, ensuring an emic perspective. By integrating multiple data collection methods, the study aims to enhance the qualitative methodology's strength and depth.

1.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Q1 - What types of questions are posed by both content instructors and students during EMI lectures?

Q2 - What factors influence the choice of language (L1 and/or L2) used in content classes, as perceived by both students and lecturers?

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 QUESTIONING PRACTICES

Classroom interaction involves communication between students and the teacher, which is typically a two-way process. Considering the teacher talk, it has been evident that questioning is a major part of classroom interaction. According to Cotton (1988), almost half of teacher talk consists of questioning instances, and this appears to have remained unchanged for nearly four decades. Regarding classroom interaction and questioning practices, the role of teachers has been at the center of the extant research (Dafouz; Sánchez-García, 2013; Lasagabaster; Doiz, 2022; Johnson; Picciuolo, 2020); however, the role of students has been overlooked, as there are limited studies done on questioning practices of students, especially in the EMI context (Duran; Sert, 2021; Yıldız et al., 2017). The significance of student questioning is that student-initiated questions indicate learner agency, and they foster a more engaging classroom environment (Jacknick, 2011; Sert, 2017). By asking questions, students take control of their learning, enhance discussions, seek guidance, and clarify concepts. These "uninvited contributions" (Waring, 2011) offer collaborative knowledge-building among participants, particularly when students co-construct knowledge during interactions (Knapp, 2014; Jiang; Zhang, 2023).

2.1.1 Question Types

Classroom interaction naturally involves questions, and they are a vital part of both teacher practice and student learning. Considering content lectures in the EMI context, it may be challenging for students to transition from daily life to academic life. In her research, Dalton-Puffer (2006) explores the speaking strategies utilized by second-language learners in content-focused classrooms. This topic is particularly significant for

MULTILINGUAL QUESTIONING PRACTICES IN EMI UNIVERSITIES: INSIGHTS FROM THE TURKISH CONTEXT: GÜL, Selin Aleyna; BAYYURT, Yasemin.

181

language learners in Expanding Circle countries, such as Türkiye, where transitioning from classroom environments to real-life contexts is essential (Kachru, 1992).

Questions have purposes; therefore, it is essential to analyze and understand the meaning behind the questioning. Thompson (1997), as cited in Dalton-Puffer (2006), identifies three categories of questions: purpose, form, and content (see Figure 2). Within the purpose category, questions are divided into referential questions, which seek new information, and display questions, also known as "known-answer questions," which evaluate what learners already know. Further analysis of lecturers' questioning practices also identified a third type: rhetorical questions, which have also been observed in other studies on questioning methods (Long; Sato, 1983; Vivekmetakorn; Thamma, 2015).

Figure 1. Question Types
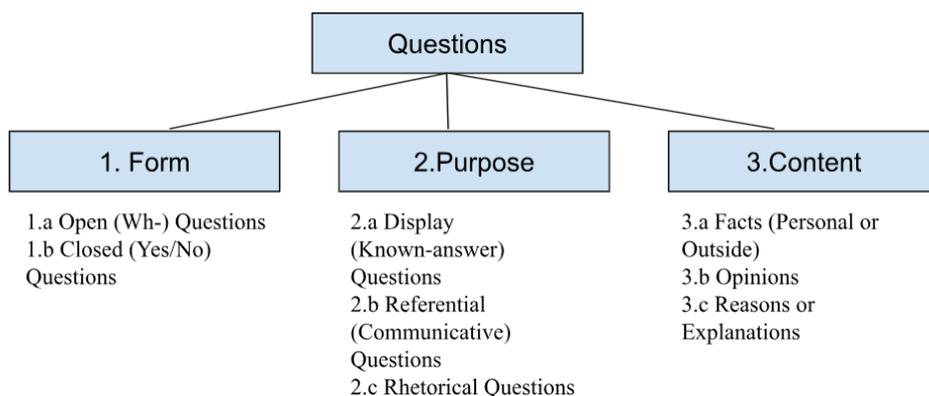
Source: Adapted from Dalton-Puffer (2006)

Questions can also be categorized by their grammatical structure, with closed questions (yes/no) being easier for students to answer. In contrast, open-ended questions (wh-) tend to be more difficult but promote greater participation and engagement (Çakır; Cengiz, 2016). Additionally, content questions may focus on facts, opinions, or reasons and explanations. Factual inquiries prompt specific responses, while opinion questions aim to involve students more actively (Brock, 1986).

2.2 TRANSLANGUAGING

The concept of translanguaging, coined initially in Welsh by Williams (1994), encompasses a more integrated approach to language use than traditional codeswitching. Michael-Luna and Canagarajah (2015) describe "code-meshing" as the blending of various communication methods and semiotics across languages. Unlike codeswitching,

MULTILINGUAL QUESTIONING PRACTICES IN EMI UNIVERSITIES: INSIGHTS FROM THE
TURKISH CONTEXT: GÜL, Selin Aleyna; BAYYURT, Yasemin.

182

which establishes rigid linguistic boundaries, translanguaging promotes creativity and fluidity in multilingual interactions, as noted by Garcia and Lin (2016).

In educational settings, translanguaging can manifest through one-word responses to complete sentences, often incorporated into multimedia lesson materials (Doiz; Lasagabaster, 2021; Rose, 2021). Within multilingual classrooms, both students and teachers engage in dynamic language practices. Researchers highlight a shift from codeswitching to a translanguaging framework, emphasizing its relevance in educational contexts (Goodman; Tastanbek, 2021; Sahan; Rose, 2021).

Mazak and Carroll (2016) argue that educators should move beyond monolingual ideologies to maximize the effectiveness of EMI. Embracing translanguaging can enhance students' use of English while also accommodating their first languages (L1). Observations and interviews suggest a growing need to understand how evolving educational translanguaging is influenced by various factors, such as time and subject matter (Smit, 2018). While translanguaging is often discussed in terms of oral and written language, this study also attends to its visual and embodied dimensions. Drawing on multimodal interaction analysis, translanguaging is conceptualized as a dynamic practice that includes not only linguistic choices but also gestures, gaze, and the use of classroom space and visual aids.

Overall, translanguaging plays a vital role in education, particularly within a multilingual EMI context. The use of L1 alongside English can enhance the learning process and affirm students' multilingual identities. Research into multilingual practices like codeswitching and translanguaging can foster better teaching and learning outcomes. This study will categorize all forms of language alternation in classroom recordings as multilingual practices, specifically referencing translanguaging in the analysis to emphasize the fluidity of language use in EMI contexts (Sahan; Rose, 2021).

3 THE STUDY & METHODOLOGY

3.1 SETTING & PARTICIPANTS

The study was conducted at a foundation university in Türkiye, and EMI was implemented across the faculties. Participants consist of two distinct groups: undergraduate students and EMI (content) lecturers. The first content lecturer, who will be referred to as Lecturer A, has 25 years of teaching experience and teaches the Electronics I course in the Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering. He speaks

MULTILINGUAL QUESTIONING PRACTICES IN EMI UNIVERSITIES: INSIGHTS FROM THE TURKISH CONTEXT: GÜL, Selin Aleyna; BAYYURT, Yasemin.

183

Turkish (L1) and English (L2), and the majority of his teaching experience is in an English-medium instruction (EMI) setting. In his lesson, fourteen undergraduate engineering students were present throughout the study. The second content lecturer, referred to as Lecturer B, has three years of teaching experience in EMI contexts and teaches the Computer Programming II course in the Department of Computer Engineering. He speaks Italian (L1) and English (L2), but he does not speak Turkish. There were twenty-seven undergraduate computer engineering students present in Lecturer B's lesson. Overall, the study participants consist of two content lecturers and 41 undergraduate engineering students.

3.2 DATA COLLECTION

The data collection procedure consists of three steps: classroom recordings, stimulated recall sessions with content lecturers, and semi-structured interviews with undergraduate students. These three steps were selected to enable triangulation of data and to gather both observed practices and participants' reflections. For a two-week period, the researcher observed and recorded the lessons of both lecturers using three cameras to avoid any blind spots (Koole, 2007). Since three cameras were simultaneously recording — two aimed at the students and one at the lecturer — the total recording time was tripled. Since the latter was considered the main camera, the time codes were set according to "Camera 3" in Figure 1, and the dataset was calculated accordingly. The total amount of classroom recordings was 7 hours and 2 minutes, covering both lessons (Electronics I and Computer Programming II) over a two-week span. These particular courses were chosen due to their differing levels of theoretical and abstract content and varying interactional styles consisting of two lecturers in the engineering field with different linguacultural backgrounds, which allowed for a broader understanding of multilingual questioning practices across contexts.

Figure 2. Positions and Range of Three Cameras

MULTILINGUAL QUESTIONING PRACTICES IN EMI UNIVERSITIES: INSIGHTS FROM THE
TURKISH CONTEXT: GÜL, Selin Aleyna; BAYYURT, Yasemin.

184
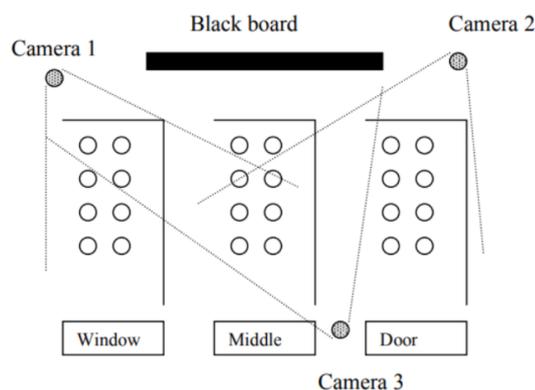
Source: Koole (2007)

After completing the classroom observations and recordings, the researcher analyzed and transcribed the classroom data using MAXQDA. In addition to the transcription, she noted instances where instructors used questioning practices, marked with color codes and various types of questions. SR sessions with content lecturers aimed to find out the rationale behind their questioning practices and translanguaging. Having asked lecturers questions about their in-class practices provided the study with an emic perspective (Smit, 2018). Adopting a multi-layered emic perspective in a research study allows the researcher to gain insight into how participants (i.e., lecturers and students) perceive and interpret their own actions; thereby constraining the researcher's interpretation and ensuring that the findings authentically represent the participants' narrative.

The semi-structured interviews with the students aimed to explore their perspectives on using questions and translanguaging practices during lessons. Similar to SR sessions, semi-structured interviews with students are also designed to ensure that they reflect the students' own viewpoints by minimizing the researcher's interpretation. In total, eight out of 41 students participated in semi-structured interviews. The total time codes of the datasets are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Total number of datasets

MULTILINGUAL QUESTIONING PRACTICES IN EMI UNIVERSITIES: INSIGHTS FROM THE TURKISH CONTEXT: GÜL, Selin Aleyna; BAYYURT, Yasemin.

185

Datasets	Length	Medium
Classroom Recordings	07:02:40	Face-to-face
Semi-structured interviews with students	03:17:57	Online (Zoom)
Stimulated recall (SR) sessions with lecturers	01:50:48	Face-to-face
TOTAL	12:11:25 (12 hours 11 minutes 25 seconds)	

Source: Created by the researcher

Regarding the investigation of questioning practices, the use of both quantitative and qualitative research tools provides a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. The quantitative analysis focused on the frequency and distribution of question types, while the qualitative analysis examined the linguistic content and structure of the questions, including their wording, duration, and use of specific question forms. As illustrated in Figure 1, both the number and nature of the questions were of central importance to the study. Particular attention was paid to how the questions were formulated, which question words were employed, and how much time was allocated to each question, all of which contributed to a nuanced interpretation of multilingual questioning practices. Finally, this study primarily aims to analyze the questioning practices of EMI lecturers and undergraduate students, focusing on the purpose of questions while also examining other question types through coding and analysis of classroom recordings. This approach helps the researcher gain a deeper understanding of these questioning practices.

3.3 ANALYSIS OF DATASETS

Transcription of the three datasets was performed manually using Microsoft Word, integrated with MAXQDA, and facilitated by the VLC media player. The datasets, associated with three distinct research areas (classroom recordings, SR sessions, and semi-structured interviews), were grouped and analyzed through MAXQDA, a leading software tool for qualitative and mixed-method research (Kuckartz; Rädiker, 2019). This software helps researchers organize, analyze, visualize, and present their data effectively. The choice of MAXQDA was primarily due to its theme-related coding capabilities, which are particularly useful for handling large datasets from an emic perspective.

MULTILINGUAL QUESTIONING PRACTICES IN EMI UNIVERSITIES: INSIGHTS FROM THE TURKISH CONTEXT: GÜL, Selin Aleyna; BAYYURT, Yasemin.

186

The preparation phase for analysis was extensive, with a significant focus on determining the appropriate analytical perspective. Data analysis can be approached in two ways: the data-driven (inductive) approach and the concept-driven (deductive) approach. MAXQDA supports both methods, enabling thematic analysis. While qualitative analysis should maintain some openness, careful planning is also essential (Kuckartz; Rädiker, 2019). Utilizing MAXQDA allowed for a systematic approach to manage the substantial data volume.

The initial transcription followed an orthographic style. After reviewing notable data instances, the focus narrowed to questioning strategies within the EMI classrooms, with research questions formulated post-analysis of the first dataset (classroom recordings). The analytical framework for questions was adapted from Dalton-Puffer's (2006) work. The analysis and presentation of classroom data in the findings chapter employed multimodal conversation analysis (CA). To enhance audience understanding, relevant excerpts from classroom observations were accompanied by screenshots from video recordings. Any identifiable faces in the screenshots were blurred to comply with ethical considerations.

In the current study, two main concepts emerged: multilingual use and questioning practices within the classroom, which were central to semi-structured student interviews and SR sessions with instructors. The analysis of these data collection methods was conducted from a data-driven perspective using MAXQDA, employing Strauss and Corbin's (1990) grounded theory coding scheme, which consists of open, axial, and selective coding. This iterative process allowed for an in-depth exploration of diverse data types.

Open coding was the initial step, where the researcher engaged with the data and developed raw codes such as "Turkish input" and "student input." Axial coding involved establishing connections between these codes, while selective coding identified a core category, in this case, "multilingual questioning practices in EMI." Ultimately, this resulted in three main categories: multilingual practices, types of questions (both lecturer-initiated and student-initiated), and teaching strategies.

The stimulated recall sessions offered vital insights into the lecturers' thought processes following classroom observations. After reviewing recorded lessons, the researcher posed targeted questions about the lecturers' multilingual patterns and

MULTILINGUAL QUESTIONING PRACTICES IN EMI UNIVERSITIES: INSIGHTS FROM THE TURKISH CONTEXT: GÜL, Selin Aleyna; BAYYURT, Yasemin.

187

questioning approaches, facilitating critical self-reflection on their teaching methods. These questions were prepared in advance and approved by an advisor. Semi-structured interviews with students provided another layer of qualitative data, guided by nine predefined core questions that allowed personalized follow-ups based on each student's program (electric-electronics or computer engineering). Care was taken to avoid leading questions, promoting a natural flow of thoughts.

Once transcription was complete, the coding scheme was applied again to analyze student perspectives using MAXQDA. The software's visualization tools, including code explorers and co-occurrence data, enabled analysis of the interplay between question types and their relationships, making the extensive data more comprehensible and facilitating meaningful conclusions.

3.4 CONVERSATION ANALYSIS

Seedhouse (2005) asserts that conversation analysis (CA) serves as a pivotal methodological approach within social science research, tracing its origins back to sociologists Sacks and Schegloff. CA is described as a "naturalistic observational discipline" designed to meticulously examine the complexities of social interaction (Sacks et al., 1974). The framework outlined by Seedhouse (2004; 2005) comprises four essential principles: the emic perspective, detailed transcription conventions, context-sensitive interactions, and data-driven analysis. These principles not only enhance theoretical understanding but also act as practical tools revealing the dynamics of multilingual engagement, particularly within EMI classroom scenarios.

A key feature of CA is its emic perspective, which focuses on understanding behavior from within a specific context rather than imposing external viewpoints. This approach enables researchers to investigate how individuals respond and engage with one another during conversations, with an emphasis on the progression and structure of their interactions (Hutchby; Wooffitt, 1998). While CA has faced criticism for overlooking certain contextual factors such as the social identities of speakers, these critiques have prompted more sophisticated and nuanced analyses that integrate these critical dimensions, thereby strengthening the methodology's applicability to various communicative contexts.

Furthermore, CA employs a comprehensive transcription methodology that captures not just verbal exchanges but also non-verbal cues, enhancing the depth of

MULTILINGUAL QUESTIONING PRACTICES IN EMI UNIVERSITIES: INSIGHTS FROM THE TURKISH CONTEXT: GÜL, Selin Aleyna; BAYYURT, Yasemin.

188

interaction analysis. Regarding the non-verbal cues, the multimodality aspect of the conversation analysis process plays a vital role in the analysis of the classroom interaction. Scholars like Goodwin and Heath have expanded on this by integrating gestures and gaze into the transcription process (Goodwin, 1984; Heath, 1986). Notably, developments such as Mondada's multimodal transcription conventions have further refined the documentation of embodied actions (Mondada, 2018). The video recordings of the lessons provided a clear overview of the classroom interaction not only with linguistic output but also the visual practices resulting in a more in-depth analysis of interaction with visual aspects such as gazes, gestures, facial expressions, spatial arrangements, and use of physical artifacts as supported by the screenshots from the recordings. Overall, the emphasis on a data-driven, bottom-up approach allows multimodal CA to avoid presumption and theoretical bias, making it a robust tool for examining multilingual practices in educational settings by exploring how language is navigated within contextually rich environments (Seedhouse, 2005).

4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study reveal significant differences in questioning practices between instructors from diverse linguistic backgrounds and provide clear insights from student-initiated questions, particularly those involving translanguaging. Before discussing the details of the extracts and the detailed analysis of the sample interactions, it is essential to comment on the numerical data regarding questioning practices in the EMI classroom context. The summarized data present the frequency and percentage of different categories of question types used in classroom interactions. In terms of *form*, open-ended questions accounted for 423 occurrences, making up 63.99% of the total questions, while closed questions had 238 occurrences, representing 36.16%. Regarding *purpose*, referential questions had 308 occurrences, which is 46.60% of the total. Display questions slightly exceeded this, with 332 occurrences at 50.23%. Rhetorical questions were the least common, with only 21 occurrences, translating to 3.18%. For *content*, questions about reasons or explanations were the most prevalent, with 341 occurrences (51.59%). Questions related to facts followed with 263 occurrences (39.79%), while opinions were the least frequently asked, with just 57 occurrences, or 8.62%. Overall, a total of 661 questions were analyzed, accounting for 100% of the data collected.

MULTILINGUAL QUESTIONING PRACTICES IN EMI UNIVERSITIES: INSIGHTS FROM THE
TURKISH CONTEXT: GÜL, Selin Aleyna; BAYYURT, Yasemin.

189

Regarding two different classes, the percentages of content question types and purpose ones are presented in graphs separately (see Appendix).

Another crucial finding was that the questioning practices between the instructors showed differences not only in frequency of question types but also in coverage of the questions. The graph indicates that content and purpose-related questions occur more frequently in electronics classes than in computer ones (see Appendix). However, when comparing this frequency data with the coverage percentages in a second line graph, a discrepancy becomes apparent. During the coding process, the researcher selected the full question utterance, which affected the coverage representation. For instance, although short closed questions like "Do you see?" and longer ones like "Did you understand the concept that we were talking about?" fall under the same category, the longer question occupies more transcription space, increasing its coverage. This suggests that CMPE classes featured more elaborated and lengthier questions, which resulted in greater textual coverage compared to those in EEE classes.

The numerical data of the questions sheds light on the surface of the classroom interaction. Considering the practices, two sample analyses of occurrence are given below in a conversation analysis format. Specific codes and symbols derived from the CA extract can be found in the Jeffersonian "Transcription Conventions" and Mondada's "Multimodal Transcription Conventions" in the appendix (see Appendix). The first sample is from the computer engineering department.

Extract 1: Inheritance (Computer programming course)

01   LecB: second principle +the second characteristic second property

                 +LecB shows two with his hand

02→   (.) ↑inheritance now inheritance do you know what

03→   inheritance ↑means in english? do you have the ↑turkish

04→   word >for it<? well you do

05   Kenan:kalıtım [sanki?

                 inheritance I guess

06   LecB: $[I don't know$

07   Mert: [may i- may i

08   LecB: $[i- i- can- cannot say that$

                 ((Students and LecB laugh))

MULTILINGUAL QUESTIONING PRACTICES IN EMI UNIVERSITIES: INSIGHTS FROM THE TURKISH CONTEXT: GÜL, Selin Aleyna; BAYYURT, Yasemin.

190

09→   Mert: MAY i google it?

10   LecB   +yeah you can google it

                  ((LecB nods))

11   +Serhat raises both hands

12   Mert: thank you

                  ((LecB makes eye contact with Serhat))

13→   Serhat:can we call it legacy?

14   LecB   legacy (.) i am trying to find the turkish word so everyone

15   knows what i am talking about okay? +can you find it?

                                 +LecB moves onto Mert's desk

16   Mert: e:r okay uhm

17   Elif: [kalıtım

                  inheritance

18   Levent:[kalitimsal

                  hereditary

19   Mert: kalıtım sanki

                   inheritance I guess

20   LecB $okay +i trust it$ (.) it's like

                       +LecB shrugs his shoulders

                       ((students and lecturer laugh))

Source: Transcribed by the researcher

In this extract, Lecturer B asks two referential questions, one after the other (lines 02-03), pausing slightly between them. In the second question, the lecturer specifically requests the Turkish translation of "inheritance." Following a brief discussion among the students in Turkish, Kenan responds with the word "kalıtım," which can be translated as the Turkish equivalent of "inheritance." He adds "sanki," an evidential marker, with a rising intonation, indicating uncertainty (Hauser, 2018). A humorous moment occurs when both Kenan and the lecturer inadvertently speak at the same time, prompting laughter from the class (Jeder, 2015). In line 05, when questioned about his confidence in his answer, Kenan speaks softly, suggesting he is unsure. The lecturer uses humor by saying "I cannot say that" with a smile, expressing his own uncertainty about Kenan's translation, as the lecturer does not speak Turkish.

Later, Mert asks if he can search for the answer online, to which the lecturer agrees, giving him a go-ahead token, nodding to encourage him. While the students check their

MULTILINGUAL QUESTIONING PRACTICES IN EMI UNIVERSITIES: INSIGHTS FROM THE TURKISH CONTEXT: GÜL, Selin Aleyna; BAYYURT, Yasemin.

191

devices, Serhat, who has been raising his hand for a while, poses an alternative question, suggesting "legacy." In a semi-structured interview, Serhat expresses "a preference for speaking only in English during lessons and dislikes when teachers use Turkish, highlighting his monolingual stance on language use in classes". This contrasts with current literature, which often supports multilingual practices (Shvidko, 2017; Vanichakorn, 2009). Notably, Serhat is the only student who has voiced concerns about using Turkish in class. However, the lecturer clarifies that he sought the Turkish term so that all students could comprehend the key concept. After receiving similar responses about the term "kalıtım," he proceeds to explain "inheritance" in English, referencing Serhat's answer. To ensure comprehension, the lecturer includes visuals of dogs in the presentation and uses his laser pointer to engage with the material projected on the whiteboard (see Figure 3). His insistence on finding the Turkish meaning is further elaborated upon during a subsequent stimulated-recall session.

Figure 3: Screenshot from the computer programming class

Source: Recorded by the researcher

After the observations, Lecturer B was shown this part of the lesson and asked about his emphasis on identifying the Turkish equivalent of specific keywords. He explained during the stimulated recall session that his familiarity with Italian, which shares roots with English, helps him understand those terms without needing clarification. He recognizes that Turkish has different linguistic roots, and thus, words that seem straightforward to him can be challenging for his students. His goal is to ensure that they grasp the meaning of any complex or uncommon words he introduces. He asks his students to translate these terms as a way of verifying their understanding, using tools like Google or dictionaries as needed (Aizawa et al., 2023; Eser; Dikilitaş, 2017). His

MULTILINGUAL QUESTIONING PRACTICES IN EMI UNIVERSITIES: INSIGHTS FROM THE TURKISH CONTEXT: GÜL, Selin Aleyna; BAYYURT, Yasemin.

192

approach highlights his concern for his students' comprehension rather than his own, as he actively listens to confirm their grasp of the language.

This situation parallels a case in Rosiers' study, where a Dutch teacher, unfamiliar with Turkish, encourages a Turkish-speaking student to communicate with her, using non-verbal cues to show her engagement (Slembrouck; Rosiers, 2018). However, the interaction described here is more meaningful, as it successfully fulfills the core purpose of communication—ensuring understanding—contrasting with Auer's critique of Rosiers' case for lacking that essential communicative element (Auer, 2022).

Through a combination of classroom observations and interviews, the study uncovered that multilingual questioning practices enhance student engagement in EMI environments. The following extract is from the Electronics I course, taught by Lecturer A. In this lesson, the lecturer asks for a volunteer to come to the board to perform a specific calculation. Since the original extract is long, some parts of the interaction will be omitted due to space restrictions.

Extract 2: Volunteer on the board (Electronics course)

15   we will choose a (.) candidate (.) to lead the solution on

16   the whiteboard

            ((students look at each other & whisper))

17   (5.0)

            ((Osman pats on Burak's shoulder to encourage him to go to the board and they laugh))

18   LecA: evet var mi gönüllü arkadaşlar? Any one who wants to

            yes any volunteers fellas?

19   (1.0)

20   do the drawing and the solution?

21   (1.0)

22   Oka:y $yapana gofret vericem$

            i'll give a wafer to the volunteer

23   Osman: [$bunu gofret kesme-$

            wafer would not be-

24   Mete: [$gofret yetmez$

            wafer will not be enough

            ((Lec A takes a sip from his mug and he laughs while drinking it))

            ((Lines 25-50 are omitted))

51→   LecA: ↑hadi peki nerden başlıyoruz? what do we start with?

MULTILINGUAL QUESTIONING PRACTICES IN EMI UNIVERSITIES: INSIGHTS FROM THE TURKISH CONTEXT: GÜL, Selin Aleyna; BAYYURT, Yasemin.

193

		let's go, okay where do we start?
52	Mete:	we first start with the voltage drain at the very beginning
		((Mete points to board))
53	LecA:	>tsch tsch [tsch<
		no no no
54	Mete:	[baska bi yer mi?
		is it somewhere else?
55	LecA:	conceptually you start with
56		(1.0)
		((Met walks to the board))
57	Burak:	equations-

Source: Transcribed by the researcher

In this extract, Lecturer A asks a student to volunteer to solve a MOSFET equation problem on the whiteboard. While doing so, he produces sentence-level Turkish utterances throughout the interaction, just as the students do. It is clear that the students feel uneasy, as they begin to whisper and suggest each other as potential "volunteers." In lines 15 and 16, one student encourages another by patting him on the shoulder to go to the board. After a short wait, in line 18, the lecturer speaks in Turkish, then repeats the same sentence in English, asking a referential question. In line 20, he lightens the mood with a humorous offer of a wafer as a reward. Aware of these "wafer promises' from past lessons, two students comment that a wafer won't be enough, highlighting the task's difficulty. This leads to a shared laugh, and the lecturer even accidentally spits a bit of his drink while chuckling. During the omitted lines between 25 and 50, the students try to negotiate with the lecturer about the prize for being a volunteer. Following the discussion, Mete volunteers to solve the equation on the board. Then, Lecturer A finalizes the discussion with line 51, producing both Turkish and English utterances, which leads the students back to the topic at hand. Lecturer A asks a display question both in Turkish and English, directing towards Mete and the whole class (see Figure 3). Mete answers the question; however, Lecturer A responds with a specific sound (tsch) in Turkish, indicating no. Mete continues his utterance in Turkish with a referential question. Then Lecturer A starts answering him with a factual statement, but his friend Burak finishes Lecturer A's utterance.

Figure 3: Screenshot from the electronics class

MULTILINGUAL QUESTIONING PRACTICES IN EMI UNIVERSITIES: INSIGHTS FROM THE
TURKISH CONTEXT: GÜL, Selin Aleyna; BAYYURT, Yasemin.

194

Extract 2: Volunteer on the board (Electronics course)

58   LecA: -↑dc (.) you start with dc analysis (.) what is the aim of

59   dc analysis?

60   Mete: to determine the key point

61   LecA: to determine the ↑operating point. ↑very good.

         ((Mete shows thumbs up and smiles at Burak and Osman))

62   LecA: so:

         ((LecA turns to the board))

63→   Osman: helal olsun°

         well done/bravo

         ((Mete smiles and turns to the board))

         ((Lines 64-78 are omitted)

79   LecA: type vg (.) vg is equal to-

80   Mete: -should i write the open formula?

81   LecA: yeah just write it (.) what is sixty eight divided by? just

82   type it >just type it<

83   Mete: tamam hocam

         okay my lecturer

84   LecA: sixty eight divided by (.) hundred forty three plus sixty

85   eight times worth what is it?

         ((LecA looks at the students #Figure 7))

86   (6.0)

         ((students including Mete calculate in their calculators))

87→   Cenk: üç nokta seksen altı°

         three point eighty six

88   Mete: üç nokta seksen altı

         three point eighty six

         ((Mete writes it on the board))

MULTILINGUAL QUESTIONING PRACTICES IN EMI UNIVERSITIES: INSIGHTS FROM THE TURKISH CONTEXT: GÜL, Selin Aleyna; BAYYURT, Yasemin.

195

89	LecA:	three point eighty six volts
90		(2.0)
91		very good

<center>Source: Transcribed by the researcher</center>

In the second part of this extract, Lecturer A's answer overlaps with Burak's. Mete answers Lecturer A's display question correctly and gets positive feedback from the lecturer. A fellow student, Osman, gives Mete an encouragement token in Turkish in line 63. Similar to the translingual expression "hocam (my lecturer)", "helal olsun (bravo)" is also used in Turkish to congratulate a student. To solve the equation, two students, Cenk and Osman, actively assist their friend Mete on the whiteboard throughout the collective problem-solving session.

The use of multiple languages among students can strengthen community bonds and convey feelings, as noted by Sert (2005) and Bensen and Çavuşoğlu (2013). This multilingual interaction not only fosters collaboration but also encourages motivation for learning. During an interview, Osman, the student who helps Mete, explains his tendency to switch languages during lectures. He states that when a lecturer selects a student to work on a problem on the board, it is essential for his peers to assist, as he recognizes that he could be in the same position. He notes a mix of Turkish and English, depending on the classroom dynamics, emphasizing the importance of supporting one another; however, he states that he tries his best to use English whenever he can.

The collaboration between Cenk and Mete in lines 87-88 shows that solving mathematical equations may require collective learning and their use of common linguistic backgrounds. Engaging in multilingual practices, such as translanguaging and code-switching, can help students co-create knowledge during lessons. Although tackling problems on the whiteboard can be both thrilling and stressful, it plays a significant role in collaborative learning (Balaman; Sert, 2017; Goodwin, 2013; Schwab, 2011). Students are pushed to think critically as they evaluate and comment on their peers' solutions (Dalton-Puffer et al., 2018).

Furthermore, Mete, the volunteer student on the board, provides insight into the challenges of participating in class during the semi-structured interview, noting that class participation is typically low. He states that when a question becomes a collective challenge, it shifts the focus from individual effort to group collaboration. This approach

MULTILINGUAL QUESTIONING PRACTICES IN EMI UNIVERSITIES: INSIGHTS FROM THE TURKISH CONTEXT: GÜL, Selin Aleyna; BAYYURT, Yasemin.

196

can enhance overall participation. Moreover, in their project-based education system, oral assessments take precedence over written exams. He states that students find that engaging at the board helps prepare them for these evaluations, since such instances often mirror what they might face in oral assessments. Thus, active participation on the board proves beneficial for students.

CONCLUSION

The types of questions posed during EMI lectures reveal interesting dynamics between content instructors and undergraduate engineering students. The questioning practices of content lecturers and undergraduate engineering students were categorized into three types: form, content, and purpose. Analysis reveals that open-ended questions were nearly twice as common as closed questions, emphasizing their role in promoting classroom interaction and higher-level thinking skills. Despite this trend, Lecturer A favored closed questions, particularly during problem-solving sessions in the electronics course, to assess students' understanding of factual information. In contrast, Lecturer B posed more open-ended questions in the computer programming course, aiming for meaningful engagement.

Deriving from the extracts in both lessons, the emphasis on problem-solving in engineering courses significantly influences the nature of these inquiries, highlighting the importance of applying knowledge to real-world contexts (Doiz; Lasagabaster, 2023). Regarding content questions, the questioning patterns also reflected differences in course content, with more fact-based questions observed in the electronics course compared to opinion-based inquiries, which were notably rare. Lecturer B favored factual and reason/explanation inquiries over opinion-based discussions, leading to limited critical inquiry within the classroom. Although students tended to respond to opinion questions when given sufficient wait time, the overall low frequency of such questions indicates a need for improvement. Therefore, it is recommended that students should be encouraged to engage with opinion questions alongside fact and reason-explanation inquiries to foster deeper critical thinking.

Considering the purpose questions, the predominance of display questions aligns with findings from previous research, indicating a consistent trend in academic settings

MULTILINGUAL QUESTIONING PRACTICES IN EMI UNIVERSITIES: INSIGHTS FROM THE
TURKISH CONTEXT: GÜL, Selin Aleyna; BAYYURT, Yasemin.

197

(Sánchez-García, 2018; Genç; Yüksel, 2021; Meneghetti, 2016). The emphasis on problem-solving in engineering courses significantly influences the nature of these inquiries, highlighting the importance of applying knowledge to real-world contexts (Doiz; Lasagabaster, 2023). Additionally, the limited use of rhetorical questions suggests a preference for fostering interaction between instructors and students, which is central to effective education (Dafouz; Sanchez-García, 2013; Vivekmetakorn; Thamma, 2015). Notably, the questioning patterns of Lecturer A and Lecturer B further illustrate these trends, with Lecturer A favoring display questions while Lecturer B leans towards referential questions, reflecting their distinct teaching styles and student interactions.

In terms of multilingual practices, both lecturers and students used their linguistic backgrounds to communicate effectively in an English-medium instruction (EMI) environment. Auer (2022) distinguishes between first language (L1), which students have mastered, and second language (L2), which they are in the process of acquiring. For the students, Turkish was their L1 and English their L2. Both undergraduate students and Lecturer A frequently alternated between Turkish and English during classes. Research indicates that EMI classes involve more than just English, as students and instructors draw from their linguistic backgrounds (Rose, 2021).

Lecturer A frequently employed translanguaging, especially when asking questions, allowing him to connect better with the students. In contrast, Lecturer B integrated metalinguistic exercises based on his Italian heritage, illustrating a broader application of translanguaging that enhances rapport with students by allowing them to find and use Turkish correspondences of technical words (García; Wei, 2014).

The difference between the coverage and the frequency of questioning practices of two lecturers may stem from the course content and the types of questions typically asked in each context. It reflects variations in the level of elaboration required across courses and suggests that computer engineering classes might demand more detailed explanations and deeper analytical engagement—possibly influenced by the fact that Lecturer B does not share the students' first language, Turkish. In contrast, Lecturer A tended to ask shorter questions, which could be attributed to his shared linguistic background with the students, allowing him to switch to Turkish for clarification or simplification when needed.

MULTILINGUAL QUESTIONING PRACTICES IN EMI UNIVERSITIES: INSIGHTS FROM THE TURKISH CONTEXT: GÜL, Selin Aleyna; BAYYURT, Yasemin.

198

The literature supports the notion that using L1 in EMI contexts can be advantageous for students, and most participants recognized its benefits (Tai; Wei, 2020). Students highlighted the positive aspects of using Turkish in their interviews, with lectures encouraging the use of various language resources and translation tools (Macaro, 2018). From students' feedback, two main factors influencing their translanguaging practices emerged: cultural nuances and language proficiency. They expressed greater comfort in articulating ideas rooted in Turkish culture, while some struggled to convey complex thoughts in English. Thus, returning to their L1 allows for more accurate self-expression. Canagarajah (2012) views flexible language choice as a collaborative meaning-making process, leading to translanguaging episodes that facilitate understanding. Sahan and Rose (2021) advocate for a translanguaging framework, which legitimizes multilingual learning in EMI contexts.

Additionally, instances from the study indicate that pedagogical translanguaging helps address misunderstandings and engage students (Aleksić; García, 2022). Researchers have explored how language alternation contributes to effective communication and repair in classroom interactions (Cheng, 2013). The study documented similar patterns of language use among lecturers and students, particularly with engineering-related terminology, demonstrating the effectiveness of translingual practices in learning environments (Bozbıyık; Balaman, 2023). In EMI interactions, both students and content lecturers utilized their combined linguistic resources to navigate subject matter effectively.

In conclusion, the current study revealed valuable viewpoints and insights from stakeholders that could enhance EMI pedagogy. The first recommendation emphasizes the importance of recognizing the diverse language skills of both lecturers and students in an EMI classroom, as this approach enhances engagement and well-being. The second suggests that institutions should provide EMI training for instructors to improve teaching effectiveness and support educators in understanding diverse student backgrounds through action research. The third advocates for creating opportunities for student participation in discussions, which can enhance engagement and help meet educational goals. Workshops and dialogue sessions can facilitate understanding of both students' and lecturers' needs.

APPENDIX

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1VVn-uO7dtd_67Dr8G8mWIgZKi5ENXuVdDlpzC2IxVng/edit?usp=sharing

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200

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202

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203

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COMPARING THE EFFICIENCY OF HUMAN-HUMAN AND HUMAN-AI INTERACTION FOR RAISING ELF AWARENESS IN YOUNG LEARNERS' TELECOLLABORATION

COMPARAÇÃO DA EFICIÊNCIA DA INTERAÇÃO HUMANO-HUMANO E HUMANO-IA PARA AUMENTAR A CONSCIÊNCIA DE ELF NA TELECOLABORAÇÃO DE JOVENS ALUNOS

Tatiana Kozlova[1]

ABSTRACT: This study compares the effectiveness of human-human and human-AI interactions in raising English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) awareness among young learners involved in intercultural telecollaboration. With AI's growing role in education, particularly in language learning, this research investigates how AI tools can complement traditional human interactions in promoting ELF awareness and intercultural communication skills. Two groups of students participated: one engaged in telecollaboration with human partners, and the other with AI-powered virtual companions. The aim was to assess how these interaction modalities influence students' understanding of ELF and their intercultural communicative competence (ICC). Using a mixed-methods approach, the study combines quantitative data (surveys) and qualitative data (interviews and interaction analysis). Findings show that while both human-human and human-AI interactions positively impact ELF awareness, human-human interactions provide more nuanced, context-sensitive learning experiences that foster deeper cultural insights and emotional engagement. In contrast, human-AI interactions offer consistent, personalized feedback, enabling greater practice opportunities and immediate language support. This comparative analysis emphasizes AI's potential in supporting language learning and ELF awareness but highlights the importance of human interaction in developing intercultural competence and emotional connections. The study concludes with recommendations for integrating both human-human and human-AI interactions in ELF-focused language education and teacher training, advocating for a blended approach that combines the strengths of both modalities to develop young learners' global communication skills and intercultural awareness.
Keywords: ELF awareness. Human-AI interaction. Telecollaboration. Intercultural competence. Language learning. Young learners. AI in education.

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COMPARING THE EFFICIENCY OF HUMAN-HUMAN AND HUMAN-AI INTERACTION FOR RAISING ELF AWARENESS IN YOUNG LEARNERS' TELECOLLABORATION – KOZLOVA, Tatiana.

205

RESUMO: Este estudo compara a eficácia das interações humano-humano e humano-IA na conscientização do inglês como língua franca (ELF) entre jovens alunos envolvidos em telecolaboração intercultural. Com o papel crescente da IA na educação, particularmente no aprendizado de idiomas, esta pesquisa investiga como as ferramentas de IA podem complementar as interações humanas tradicionais na promoção da conscientização do ELF e das habilidades de comunicação intercultural. Dois grupos de alunos participaram: um envolvido em telecolaboração com parceiros humanos e o outro com companheiros virtuais com tecnologia de IA. O objetivo era avaliar como essas modalidades de interação influenciam a compreensão dos alunos sobre o ELF e sua competência comunicativa intercultural (ICC). Usando uma abordagem de métodos mistos, o estudo combina dados quantitativos (pesquisas) e dados qualitativos (entrevistas e análise de interação). As descobertas mostram que, embora as interações humano-humano e humano-IA tenham impacto positivo na conscientização do ELF, as interações humano-humano fornecem experiências de aprendizagem mais diferenciadas e sensíveis ao contexto que promovem percepções culturais mais profundas e envolvimento emocional. Em contraste, as interações humano-IA oferecem feedback consistente e personalizado, permitindo maiores oportunidades de prática e suporte imediato ao idioma. Esta análise comparativa enfatiza o potencial da IA no suporte ao aprendizado de idiomas e à conscientização do ELF, mas destaca a importância da interação humana no desenvolvimento de competência intercultural e conexões emocionais. O estudo conclui com recomendações para integrar interações humano-humano e humano-IA na educação de idiomas focada no ELF e no treinamento de professores, defendendo uma abordagem combinada que combine os pontos fortes de ambas as modalidades para aprimorar as habilidades de comunicação global e a conscientização intercultural dos jovens aprendizes.
Palavras-chave: Conscientização do ELF. Interação humano-IA. Telecolaboração. Competência intercultural. Aprendizado de idiomas. Jovens aprendizes. IA na educação.

INTRODUCTION

The increasing role of English as a global lingua franca (ELF) in recent decades has brought about notable changes in its phonological, lexical, and grammatical features. ELF reflects the "fluid, flexible, contingent, and often non-native-influenced" nature of language use in a globalized world (Jenkins et al., 2011, p. 284), and its integration into English Language Teaching (ELT) practices requires a paradigm shift (Jenkins, 2006; Seidlhofer, 2011; Cogo; Dewey, 2012; Sifakis; Sougari, 2010; Vettorel; Lopriore, 2013).

Scholars (e.g., Graddol, 2006; Pennycook, 2009; Tsantila *et al*., 2016; Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2017; Grazzi, 2018; Sifakis *et al.,* 2018) have increasingly emphasized the need to adapt language teaching methods to align with the evolving sociolinguistic realities of the 21st century. Rose *et al.* list key proposals for change in ELT, among which "increasing ELF exposure", "raising awareness of ELF strategies" and "emphasizing respect for

COMPARING THE EFFICIENCY OF HUMAN-HUMAN AND HUMAN-AI INTERACTION FOR RAISING ELF AWARENESS IN YOUNG LEARNERS' TELECOLLABORATION – KOZLOVA, Tatiana.

206

diverse culture and identity" are mentioned in order to better equip students for effective communication in real-world contexts (Rose *et al.*, 2021, p. 159).

Researchers in the ELF field (Guth; Helm, 2010; O'Dowd, 2012; Grazzi, 2013, 2015, 2017; Kohn, 2016) suggest that ELF awareness can be developed through innovative intercultural activities, such as telecollaboration, where learners from diverse cultural backgrounds collaborate online. These ELF-based activities not only promote ELF awareness but also foster intercultural communicative competence (Di Sarno Garcia, 2023).

However, intercultural telecollaboration projects pose several significant challenges for educators. These include complex organizational demands, considerable time investment, and a degree of unpredictability, particularly due to their reliance on partner institutions, which may vary in commitment and, in some cases, withdraw from the project before its completion. These critical issues prompt reflection on the potential application of recent advancements in generative AI within the field of education, outlined by scholars, such as Lahby *et al.* (2024) and Pratschke (2024), in order to create an AI-driven alternative to real telecollaboration projects, preserving their benefits, while mitigating associated drawbacks.

Existing literature has already demonstrated promising results regarding the use of AI in ELT (Creely, 2024, Crompton *et al.*, 2024; Wei, 2023). Recently, a study by Lee *et al.* (2025), which investigated the potential of English as a lingua franca (ELF) interactions with AI-chatbots in raising ELF – awareness, revealed that AI-chatbot's communicative function may resemble ELF communication when it replicates the speech patterns of a specific English speaker using advanced Natural Language Processing (NLP) trained on extensive language data, particularly when the model speaker and human interlocutor come from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, thus mirroring the intercultural dynamics of ELF interactions. They also emphasize that AI-chatbots support task-based, goal-oriented language learning by prompting the development of meaning-negotiation strategies in L2 learners, paralleling the pragmatic approaches used by ELF-speakers to achieve mutual understanding. Moreover, they draw a comparison between the low-stress interaction experienced with AI and ELF communication, noting that speakers tend to feel more comfortable than when engaging with native speakers (*ibid.*). However, this

COMPARING THE EFFICIENCY OF HUMAN-HUMAN AND HUMAN-AI INTERACTION FOR RAISING ELF AWARENESS IN YOUNG LEARNERS' TELECOLLABORATION – KOZLOVA, Tatiana.

207

study discusses Global English awareness development among pre-service teachers, and the impact of AI-supported language tools on young learners remains underexplored.

To address this gap, the current study aimed to assess the effects of telecollaboration and AI-assisted language learning approaches on young learners, i.e., a group at a unique stage of linguistic, cognitive, and emotional development. The study posed the following research question: What are the differences and similarities between the interactions of students from diverse linguacultural backgrounds and young learners' interactions with AI tutors in raising ELF awareness and fostering intercultural communicative competence?

This empirical study involved two groups of Italian students: one collaborating with human partners from Kyrgyzstan via telecommunication and the other interacting with AI-powered virtual companions. The Italian and Kyrgyz pupils, aged 10-11, were in Grade 6 (the final year of elementary school in Kyrgyzstan and the first year of middle school in Italy). The first group comprised sixteen Italian students from a bilingual Italian-English school in Rome (St. Philip School), who collaborated on *PBworks* platform with fourteen Kyrgyz students from Bishkek (United World International School). The project also included the active participation of one Italian middle-school teacher and one Kyrgyz primary school teacher. The second group consisted of sixteen Italian students (aged 10-11) who interacted with AI-powered bots on the AI-mediated language learning platform *SchoolAI*.

The primary goal of the study was to assess how these different forms of interaction influenced students' comprehension and use of ELF, as well as their intercultural communicative competence (ICC). Students completed pre- and post-project questionnaires, which gathered three types of data: factual (about participants), behavioral (regarding their past use of English), and attitudinal (their views on the global use of English) (Dörnyei, 2010). Following Dörnyei's guidelines for young learners, the survey primarily consisted of multiple-choice questions, with a few open-ended questions to encourage reflection on global English use and communication strategies.

The project unfolded in three phases: the first phase (pre-treatment) explored students' experiences with ELF and their understanding of concepts such as normativity, appropriateness, comprehensibility, and ownership of English. The second phase (treatment) included a project conducted in two stages - introductory session in which

COMPARING THE EFFICIENCY OF HUMAN-HUMAN AND HUMAN-AI INTERACTION FOR RAISING ELF AWARENESS IN YOUNG LEARNERS' TELECOLLABORATION – KOZLOVA, Tatiana.

208

participants learned about each other's cultures and collaboration session in which they had to create a song about intercultural friendship. The third phase (post-treatment) included a post-survey and a focus group, which provided qualitative feedback on the students' experiences with intercultural telecollaboration. Data from the pre-survey, post-survey, and focus group were analyzed separately by each teacher for privacy reasons, and this article presents conclusions based on feedback from the Italian participants.

The study concludes by advocating for the integration of both human-human and human-AI interactions in ELF-focused language education and teacher training. It supports a blended approach that combines the strengths of both methods to enhance young learners' ELF awareness and intercultural communicative competence.

1 LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1.1 Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory

This study is grounded in Vygotsky's contributions to social constructivist learning theories, which emphasize the importance of social interaction and collaborative learning in cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986, 1998, 2004). In this framework, less proficient learners engage in activities with more skilled individuals, such as teachers, peers, or, in contemporary contexts, AI programs. Such expert peers provide cognitive scaffolding to help learners expand their knowledge.

A central concept in social constructivism is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which distinguishes between a learner's current abilities and their potential capabilities with external support. The most widely referenced definition of ZPD is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Vygotsky further explicates that

the actual developmental level characterizes mental development retrospectively, while the ZPD characterizes mental development prospectively… the ZPD permits us to delineate the child's immediate future and his dynamic developmental state, allowing not only for what

COMPARING THE EFFICIENCY OF HUMAN-HUMAN AND HUMAN-AI INTERACTION FOR RAISING ELF AWARENESS IN YOUNG LEARNERS' TELECOLLABORATION – KOZLOVA, Tatiana.

209

already has been achieved developmentally but also for what is in the course of maturing (*ibid*., p. 86-87).

As Lantolf and Thorne state, the ZPD serves as a valuable framework for educators in creating optimal learning experiences (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006, p. 267).

In this study, both groups engage in interactive language learning activities aligned with Vygotsky's approach (Swain *et al.*, 2015). The first group collaborates with peers, supporting each other within their ZPDs, while the second group interacts with an AI-powered tool, which serves as a collaborative learning partner. These interactions enable learners to regulate their learning and progress within their ZPD.

The study also incorporates modern theories on AI and computer-assisted learning (see section 1.2), recognizing the significant role of technology in language instruction. AI provides an added dimension to collaborative learning (Zheng *et al.*, 2021), enabling learners to interact with AI tools that support their progression within their ZPD. This mirrors Vygotsky's principles of mediated learning (Vygotsky, 1978), underscoring the value of technology as a collaborative partner in the learning process.

Additionally, the effectiveness of AI-based educational tools depends on collaborative abilities—skills that help learners engage with AI systems, instructors, and peers to improve their outcomes (Chen *et al.*, 2022). These abilities include strategies for effective interaction in AI-supported environments and are crucial for meaningful engagement in AI-assisted language learning. Learners who can leverage AI tools effectively are more likely to benefit from feedback and co-construct knowledge (Hsu *et al.*, 2023). By integrating Vygotsky's foundational ideas with modern AI theories, this study explores how digital technology can improve language learning, offering insights into how AI can serve as a collaborative tool for young learners.

1.1.2 English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)

This research draws on current studies in the field of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). The emergence of ELF reflects the shift from English being primarily a native language or a tool for communication between native and non-native speakers, to its widespread use as a common medium of communication among non-native speakers (NNESs) from diverse cultural backgrounds (Graddol, 2006). ELF is commonly defined as

COMPARING THE EFFICIENCY OF HUMAN-HUMAN AND HUMAN-AI INTERACTION FOR RAISING ELF AWARENESS IN YOUNG LEARNERS' TELECOLLABORATION – KOZLOVA, Tatiana.

210

the "use of English among speakers of different first languages (L1), for whom English is the communicative medium of choice" (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 7). Jenkins *et al.* (2011) highlight that the globalization of English has made it more fluid and flexible, shaped by non-native speakers to meet local needs. Schneider (2010) refers to English as a "glocal" language, blending global and local characteristics that reflect the diverse identities of its users. This view underscores the idea that ELF can facilitate communication without compromising the cultural identity of NNESs.

The transcultural nature of ELF has become an important focus of study. With the majority of English speakers now being non-native (Ethnologue, 2022), language use is seen as a dynamic system, where cultural and linguistic identities are fluid and negotiated in real-time communication (Lopriore; Grazzi, 2016). This challenges traditional views of language and culture, advocating for a perspective that embraces multiple cultural identities, rather than associating language with a single national identity (Baker, 2018, p. 14).

Jenkins (2015) further expands on ELF, describing it as a "multilingua franca," where English serves as a contact language alongside other languages in multicultural contexts. This concept of ELF as transcultural and translingual reflects the diverse linguistic resources that learners draw upon in global communication (García; Wei, 2014). Scholars like Baker and Sangiamchit (2019) argue that ELF should not be viewed as a monolithic variety, but as a dynamic practice that evolves with users' multilingual and multicultural backgrounds.

The rise of ELF has significant implications for English Language Teaching (ELT). Traditional English language teaching and assessment methods, which prioritize native-speaker norms and focus on accuracy, native-like pronunciation and grammatical correctness, are increasingly questioned, as ELF research shows that effective communication in English does not require adherence to standardized forms, provided mutual understanding is achieved (Cogo; Dewey, 2012; Jenkins; Leung, 2014). As a result, there is a growing need to move beyond native-speaker norms and adopt a more flexible, context-dependent approach to language teaching and assessment in ELT (Llurda, 2009; Dewey, 2012; Holliday, 2005; Kohn 2015).

According to Grazzi (2020), in majority of schools English is still taught as a foreign language according to a structured syllabus, while in the real world ever younger students

COMPARING THE EFFICIENCY OF HUMAN-HUMAN AND HUMAN-AI INTERACTION FOR RAISING ELF AWARENESS IN YOUNG LEARNERS' TELECOLLABORATION – KOZLOVA, Tatiana.

211

are gaining access to internet and becoming exposed to English input in extra-scholastic context (video games, YouTube videos, fan groups etc). Grazzi suggests that there is a direct relationship between the process of teaching/learning in a formal environment, extra-scholastic sources of English input and the emergence of ELF as a medium of communication in real intercultural communicative events. The process of their interaction has been defined "the convergence of EFL and ELF in the speaker/learner's performance." (Grazzi, 2013, p. 67 in Grazzi, 2020). In other words, EFL-learners turn into ELF-users once they step outside the scholastic context into real communicative situations. The convergence of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and ELF in real-world communication emphasizes the importance of integrating ELF awareness into ELT (Sifakis, 2017; Sifakis; Bayyurt, 2018; Sifakis *et al.*, 2018, Vettorel, 2018, Seidlhofer, 2011).

The assumption of convergence between English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a lingua franca (ELF) in second language education, by means of the learner's performance, is based on the critical analysis of the Interlanguage hypothesis (Selinker, 1972) that has been holding a significant place in second-language acquisition and ELT for decades. The Interlanguage Hypothesis (Selinker, 1972), which views language learning as a progression from L1 to L2, has been challenged by the notion that ELF learning involves constructing a personal, culturally informed version of English (Kohn, 2011). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, as discussed earlier, further supports this by highlighting the role of social interaction and peer feedback in language development (Lantolf; Thorne, 2006). Application of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory to ELF naturally leads to the importance of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in effective language learning, which will be explored in the next section.

1.1.3 Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) formalized by Byram's (1997), model emphasizing attitudes, knowledge, and skills for effective communication across cultures, has been the most influential in language teaching and has informed many of the later models. However, more recent research has reconceptualized ICC in order to reflect the realities of ELF that provides a more complex view of communication. In ELF contexts, where English is used among speakers of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds,

COMPARING THE EFFICIENCY OF HUMAN-HUMAN AND HUMAN-AI INTERACTION FOR RAISING ELF AWARENESS IN YOUNG LEARNERS' TELECOLLABORATION – KOZLOVA, Tatiana.

212

communication often involves transcultural negotiation – the dynamic, situated co-construction of meaning across cultural boundaries (Baker, 2015; Ishikawa, 2020).

Baker (2015, 2018, 2022) argues that ICC must evolve into a broader framework of intercultural and transcultural competence, which moves beyond static or essentialist notions of national culture to a model that accounts for fluid, emergent nature of intercultural communication in globalized ELF-mediated context. He further states that "in intercultural and transcultural approaches communication includes more than just linguistic forms. Pragmatics, communication strategies, multimodality, linguistic and intercultural awareness are all key" (Baker, 2020, p. 34).

Central to Baker's approach is the understanding that a culture is not fixed or inherited but constructed through interaction and that language classrooms should encourage learners' critical engagement with cultural diversity rather than simply teach facts about cultures. This view aligns closely with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the centrality of social interaction and cultural mediation in cognitive and communicative development.

From this perspective, ELF-communication becomes a pedagogical space for developing intercultural and transcultural awareness – a capacity to be open, reflexive and able to navigate fluid communicative practices across cultural borders. Baker (2022) also emphasizes the recognition of power dynamics in communication as essential elements of language education aiming to prepare learners for real-world intercultural encounters. The notion of intercultural awareness (ICA) he advocates for, incorporates both ICC and critical perspectives on communicative and intercultural communicative competence. He defines ICA as

a conscious understanding of the role culturally based forms, practices and frames of reference can have in intercultural communication, and an ability to put these conceptions into practice in a flexible and context specific manner in communication' (Baker, 2015, p.163).

Subsequently, building on Jenkins' (2015) notion of English as a multilingua franca (EMF), which situates ELF within broader multilingual practices, Ishikawa (2020; 2021) introduced the concept of EMF awareness, using "awareness" in a broad sense as an alternative to "competence".

According to Baker and Ishikawa (2021)

COMPARING THE EFFICIENCY OF HUMAN-HUMAN AND HUMAN-AI INTERACTION FOR RAISING ELF AWARENESS IN YOUNG LEARNERS' TELECOLLABORATION – KOZLOVA, Tatiana.

213

EMF awareness does not only aim to raise students' awareness (in a narrow sense) of the roles and effects of language and culture in communication and nurture confidence as English users. It also aims to enable students to connect this conscious understanding to their own transcultural and transmodal communication by appropriating English and multilingual resources in a flexible, situationally appropriate manner (*ibid*, p. 255)

Like ICC, EMF awareness is predominantly developed in response to educational needs, and there is a focus on 'communicative processes rather than linguistic or other products' (*ibid*, p. 256). In sum, these critical approaches to communicative and intercultural communicative competence, such as EMF awareness, adopt fluid perspectives on the connections between linguistic resources and cultural practices and references and so align well with transcultural communication.

Although Byram's ICC model is not able to account for everything observed from actual instances of intercultural and transcultural communication, it has a major strength - its educational focus. Moreover, it has been proven to be a very important and useful model in language education contexts. Additionally, despite not being based on empirical data, many of the elements of ICC have been observed in research into intercultural interactions (e.g. Baker, 2011). Therefore, ICC will be used in this study, dealing with language teaching.

Evaluating ICC in young learners necessitates special attention to their cognitive abilities and language skills. At this developmental stage, children may not possess advanced literacy or abstract thinking skills, so assessments should include simple, engaging tasks that measure their understanding of cultural differences, social skills, and attitudes toward other cultures. Such assessments should be interactive, using visuals, age-appropriate language, and possibly role-playing to effectively evaluate ICC (Byram *et al.*, 2002).

1.2 TELECOLLABORATION AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Telecollaboration, where students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds collaborate online, provides an important opportunity to raise English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) awareness and intercultural competence (O'Dowd, 2012). However, as described in the introduction, intercultural telecollaboration projects present several significant challenges for educators. These challenges involve a high level of uncertainty - given the

COMPARING THE EFFICIENCY OF HUMAN-HUMAN AND HUMAN-AI INTERACTION FOR RAISING ELF AWARENESS IN YOUNG LEARNERS' TELECOLLABORATION – KOZLOVA, Tatiana.

214

dependence on partner institutions, whose engagement may fluctuate and compromise the success of the entire project, intricate organizational requirements and significant time commitment on the part of the teacher.

These critical aspects prompt reflection on the possibilities to apply the recent advancements in generative AI within the field of education outlined by some scholars (Lahby M. *et al.*, 2024; Pratschke M., 2024) in order to simulate intercultural telecollaboration projects. Such attempts are in line with the frameworks like Education 4.0 (World Economic Forum, 2024) that emphasize integrating AI to equip students with essential skills for the future while addressing potential risks. However, these frameworks lack clear guidelines for integration of AI into ELT, which might be elaborated based on the empirical research and successful projects.

Recent studies indicate how AI can improve language teaching and learning, including developments like conversational AI for real-time practice and AI-enabled content creation, personalized feedback and scalable support (Creely, 2024; Crompton *et al.*, 2024; Wei, 2023). Yet, to date, AI has been associated with its tendency to standardize language expression and limit cultural narratives, as well as concerns about over-reliance on technology, which may inhibit creativity and critical thinking. As Creely (2024) notes, "language's richness lies in its cultural depth and human essence—attributes that AI, despite its prowess in syntax and semantics, struggles to fully encapsulate" (Creely, 2024, p.9).

Nonetheless, scholars like Lee *et al.* (2025) have demonstrated that AI- tools also present new opportunities for enhancing Global Englishes awareness, including ELF-awareness, in their study with pre-service teachers. The researchers contend that

AI chatbot's communicative function might align with ELF communication when it mirrors the speech of a specific English speaker and interacts with a human interlocutor (Lee; Jeon, 2023; Rose; Galloway, 2019). To achieve this, advanced NLP technology is required to clone and replicate an individual's speech based on extensive language performance data from that person (Zhang; Lin, 2022). When the model speaker for an AI chatbot originates from a linguistic and cultural background different from the human interlocutor, their exchange may parallel ELF communication between speakers from diverse lingua-cultural backgrounds (Jenkins, 2015; Seidlhofer, 2011) (*ibid*, p. 55).

Additionally, they highlight that

COMPARING THE EFFICIENCY OF HUMAN-HUMAN AND HUMAN-AI INTERACTION FOR RAISING ELF AWARENESS IN YOUNG LEARNERS' TELECOLLABORATION – KOZLOVA, Tatiana.

215

AI chatbots promote task-based learning, enabling L2 learners to enhance their communication skills through meaning negotiation strategies. (Kim *et al.*, 2022). This AI chatbot function in goal-oriented language learning is akin to ELF speakers' use of pragmatic strategies in communication situations to achieve mutual understanding (Sung, 2020) (*ibid*, p. 55).

Lee *et al.* further compare the anxiety-free interaction with AI to ELF-communication where speakers often feel more at ease than when communicating with native-speakers (*ibid*). Although this study discusses Global English awareness development among pre-service teachers, it lays the groundwork for conducting similar research with learners.

Despite the promise of AI in language learning, research on its role in enhancing ELF awareness is still limited. Comparisons with human-human interactions—which involve emotional engagement, cultural sensitivities, and the extent to which recent AI versions can replicate these elements—remain underexplored. Thus, it is crucial to understand how AI can complement traditional methods in promoting ELF awareness as educational technologies advance. A recently published study by Lee et al. (2025) paved the way for this line of inquiry, stating that "although Global Englishes (GE) research continues to grow in English language teaching (ELT), the role of technology in enhancing GE awareness remains underexplored" (*ibid.*, p. 49). Their study sought to address this gap by investigating the potential of ELF interactions with AI chatbots in raising GE awareness. Building on their approach, the present study aims to apply similar methods to younger learners.

This investigation is also informed by recent developments in "ELF-aware pedagogy," introduced by scholars such as Nicos Sifakis. While ELF-aware pedagogy does not constitute a distinct methodological system, it "adopts a perspective that departs from treating English as a foreign language and focuses on and builds upon what learners already do with English" (Sifakis, 2017, p. 16). An example of this approach is illustrated in the ENRICH Project, funded by Erasmus+, whose Unit 2 focuses on defining the concept (Section 2.1) and the content (Section 2.2) of ELF-aware teaching. Although ELF awareness does not prescribe a new teaching methodology, it is intended to be integrated into existing ELT pedagogies.

The integration of AI tools in language learning, particularly in enhancing ELF awareness and intercultural competence, serves as the foundation for the present study, which explores how these interactions compare to traditional human-human

COMPARING THE EFFICIENCY OF HUMAN-HUMAN AND HUMAN-AI INTERACTION FOR RAISING ELF AWARENESS IN YOUNG LEARNERS' TELECOLLABORATION – KOZLOVA, Tatiana.

216

communication. The following section outlines the methodology employed to investigate the effectiveness of these different interaction modes in raising pupil's awareness of the changing scenario of contemporary English on a global scale and, what is more important, in equipping them to cope with it.

2 THE STUDY

2.1 EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

The study was conducted at St. Philip School of Rome, which is a bilingual (English-Italian) private school, which offers students a stimulating learning environment. As a bilingual private school, it usually attracts students from families with a medium-high socioeconomic level. The parents of the students tend to have a strong interest in quality education, which promotes a global and multilingual approach, thus preparing them for a future in international contexts. Bilingual teaching allows students to develop advanced language skills throughout their journey, from preschool to lower secondary school. Moreover, the excellence of the school's language curriculum is demonstrated by the achievement of the "Cambridge Institute" qualification.

The choice of school was motivated by the fact that St. Philip School adopts an innovative "savoir faire" educational method, which promotes hands-on learning, in Italian and English. Students are not limited to memorizing information, but are actively involved in activities that stimulate critical thinking and problem solving. The approach aims to develop transversal skills that promote the integral growth of students. Furthermore, the school stands out for the continuous professional development of its teachers, collaborating with pedagogical and didactic research institutes.

The study included two groups of students: one engaged in telecollaboration with human partners and the other with AI-driven virtual companions. The main objective was to assess how these different modes of interaction impact students' comprehension and use of ELF, as well as their intercultural communicative competence (ICC).

2.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The project was carried out in the 2024-2025 school year and included two phases:

COMPARING THE EFFICIENCY OF HUMAN-HUMAN AND HUMAN-AI INTERACTION FOR RAISING ELF AWARENESS IN YOUNG LEARNERS' TELECOLLABORATION – KOZLOVA, Tatiana.

217

Phase 1: An exploratory session where pupils introduced themselves and learned about each other's cultures through question-and-answer (Q&A) activities.

Phase 2: A collaborative session in which the pupils worked together to create a song about intercultural friendship.

The AI- project replicated the same phases of the real telecollaboration project. Before and after treatment, pupils were asked to fill in paper and pencil questionnaires. The questionnaires included all 3 types of data that the questionnaires yield: factual, behavioral and attitudinal (Dörney, 2010). Qualitative data collection had to be appropriate for young learners, therefore most questions had multiple-choice items to choose from and remaining open questions contained certain guidance.

The first questionnaire consisted of 20 questions and included 2 sections. Its aim was to gather information about the pupils' use of English outside the classroom and their understanding of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). After the treatment another survey was carried out including a questionnaire and a focus group to elicit further information about participants' perceptions. The second questionnaire consisted of 13 questions and encouraged participants to: a) reflect on their intercultural collaboration experience, and b) evaluate the communication strategies they employed during the cooperative task.

In the first group Italian and Kyrgyz teachers administered these questionnaires separately, and the results were not shared between them for privacy reasons. As a result, the data analysis and conclusions regarding the overall effectiveness of the project are based solely on the responses from the Italian participants.

2.3 PARTICIPANTS

Two groups of Italian young learners aged 10-11 participated in the study. All of them previously have achieved the Cambridge Young Learners Certification "Flyers".
1. Human-Human Interaction Group (n=16): Students in this group engaged in intercultural telecollaboration with peers from different cultural background (Kyrgyzstan), using real-time communication tools to collaborate on tasks designed to raise ELF awareness. The Italian and Kyrgyz pupils, were in Grade 6 (the final year of elementary school in Kyrgyzstan and the first year of middle school in Italy). The first group comprised sixteen Italian students from a bilingual Italian-English school in Rome

COMPARING THE EFFICIENCY OF HUMAN-HUMAN AND HUMAN-AI INTERACTION FOR RAISING ELF AWARENESS IN YOUNG LEARNERS' TELECOLLABORATION – KOZLOVA, Tatiana.

218

(St. Philip School), who collaborated on *PBworks* platform with fourteen Kyrgyz students from Bishkek (United World International School). The project also included the active participation of one Italian middle-school teacher and one Kyrgyz primary school teacher

2. Human-AI Interaction Group (n=16): This group worked with AI-powered virtual companions that simulated intercultural communication tasks and provided real-time feedback. It consisted of sixteen Italian students, who were in Grade 6 (the first year of middle school in Italy). They interacted with AI-powered bots on the AI-mediated language learning platform SchoolAI.

2.3.1 Platforms

Pbworks

Participants from the first group collaborated on the PBworks platform (formerly PBwiki), a real-time collaborative editing system. A free basic wiki workspace (http://stphilip.pbworks.com) was set up for the project, along with accounts for all Italian and Kyrgyz students. The students were instructed to click on the link provided, log in with their accounts, and introduce themselves and learn about each other's cultures through question-and-answer (Q&A) activities and then proceed to create together a song about intercultural friendship.

School AI

For the second group, **SchoolAI educational platform,** was used to provide interaction between young learners and AI-powered bots. *SchoolAI* has been widely adopted across the globe to upgrade the learning experience with powerful and safe AI-tools that adapt to individual learning styles. The platform was designed specifically to accommodate the needs of young learners, providing age-appropriate content and interaction features. Through the AI-bot, students were able to practice English in real-time, receive instant feedback, and engage in dialogues that simulate real-life situations, which is crucial for building both linguistic competence and confidence in communication.

Since the AI- project aimed to replicate the supportive learning environment found in real telecollaboration projects, the AI-bot - designed by the teacher - was programmed to be non-judgmental and patient, so that students could practice their language skills without fear of making mistakes or being criticized. This is especially important for young

COMPARING THE EFFICIENCY OF HUMAN-HUMAN AND HUMAN-AI INTERACTION FOR
RAISING ELF AWARENESS IN YOUNG LEARNERS' TELECOLLABORATION – KOZLOVA,
Tatiana.

219

learners, who may feel more comfortable interacting with AI than with human instructors when experimenting with new language skills.

In order to create the desired experience, that mimicked real-world intercultural communication scenario of the project that the first group of pupils was involved in, the teacher designed the chatbot with the following settings:

Title: English as a Lingua Franca: interaction with a Kyrgyz 10-year old in order to create a song about intercultural friendship

AI Prompt: mimic an ELF- interaction with a Kyrgyz 10-year old in order to collaboratively create a song about intercultural friendship. This chatbot should raise student's awareness of English as a lingua franca and develop their intercultural communicative competence.

Figure 1. Cover image of AI-powered chatbot

Source: SchoolAI

Description for students: Join a fun chat to create a song about friendship with a Kyrgyz friend and discover how English connects people worldwide and enhances cross-cultural communication.

School AI is an adaptive learning platform that has gained recognition among educators as a very flexible tool. The present study investigated whether, given the appropriate prompt, it would be able to mimic ELF interactions, drawing on source data from existing ELF-corpora that reflect real-world global communication practices. Nonetheless, it is essential to acknowledge that linguistic variation represents only one aspect of ELF-awareness. Equally important is the effort to raise awareness of ELF-related communicative strategies in ELT, thereby empowering L2 learners to become proficient ELF users in diverse international contexts (Rose; Galloway, 2019). In this sense, AI-

COMPARING THE EFFICIENCY OF HUMAN-HUMAN AND HUMAN-AI INTERACTION FOR RAISING ELF AWARENESS IN YOUNG LEARNERS' TELECOLLABORATION – KOZLOVA, Tatiana.

220

chatbots offer stimulating intercultural communication, allowing learners to experience communicative effectiveness without conforming to native-speaker norms.

2.4 DATA COLLECTION

Data were collected through a combination of questionnaires and qualitative interviews. Interaction data in the form of written messages posted by pupils were also analyzed to identify patterns related to ELF awareness, communication strategies, and cultural understanding. Employment of a mixed-methods approach was aimed at providing a comprehensive analysis of the impact of human-human and human-AI interactions on ELF awareness and ICC.

3 ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This experience was beneficial for the Italian young learners for several reasons. From the data analysis of the pre-treatment and post-treatment questionnaires, and from the focus group discussion we could see how the Italian young learners' attitude towards the use of English as a global language had gradually changed. Already in the pre-treatment stage, as the questionnaires have shown, some young learners knew that English was not only spoken in native-speaker and post-colonial countries. However, by the end of the telecollaboration project, as analysis of the questionnaires revealed, participants' ELF-awareness reached 85% of pupils in Group 1 and 75% in Group 2. As the results of the survey showed, working as an intercultural community of practice, all participants (100%) of Group 1 had improved their ICC via the use of ELF. For instance, in response to the question "What did you learn from this cooperation?" all participating students circled the option "I learned to work together with people from a different country". Further insights emerged during the focus group discussion, where pupils specified that they learned:

"to be patient"

 "we are all different"

"to put something of us" = to make their contribution

COMPARING THE EFFICIENCY OF HUMAN-HUMAN AND HUMAN-AI INTERACTION FOR RAISING ELF AWARENESS IN YOUNG LEARNERS' TELECOLLABORATION – KOZLOVA, Tatiana.

221

"not always things can go the way you want"

"I can have friends in all the world"

"everyone can be friends no matter what"

"working together we can achieve better results" (learners' expressions).

For Group 2 the results were significantly lower, only 62% of students demonstrated improvement in ICC, due to the perception of dealing with a computer program and a wide-spread feeling of AI-bot as "having no personality" and "being fake" (*learners' expressions*).

As the data indicate, the vast majority of pupils from both groups especially appreciated the creative dimension of the project. Moreover, participants in Group 1 showed their genuine appreciation for the differences and similarities between their cultures and enjoyed the social dimension of intercultural telecollaboration as an opportunity to meet new friends from a different part of the world.

The dynamics observed in the analysis of the corpus compiled for this study, which includes young learners' interactions with both peers and AI-powered chatbots, offer valuable insights. These findings not only contribute to future research but also have practical implications for enhancing the functionality of existing AI platforms, making them more realistic and suitable for young learners.

One potential direction for future research in the field of AI-chatbots might be the exploring their ability to mimic ELF interactions drawing on source data from existing ELF-corpora that reflect real-world global communication practices. Currently AI-powered virtual companions interact though Standard English, even when prompted to simulate ELF-style negotiations, which poses certain limits to the authenticity of such ELF-experience.

However, it is important to recognize that linguistic variation is only one component of ELF-awareness. Equally important is the focus on communicative effectiveness, prioritizing mutual intelligibility, clarity and understanding that meaning is co-

COMPARING THE EFFICIENCY OF HUMAN-HUMAN AND HUMAN-AI INTERACTION FOR RAISING ELF AWARENESS IN YOUNG LEARNERS' TELECOLLABORATION – KOZLOVA, Tatiana.

222

constructed in interaction, often through negotiation. AI-chatbots remain valuable in imitating scenarios of intercultural exchange, as they encourage learner agency and enable them to experience communicative effectiveness despite their lack of adherence to native-speaker norms.

In fact, in this study we see how School AI understood and handled non-standard input produced by students really well, while we also see some instances of negotiation of meaning typical of ELF-interactions, when pupils and AI reciprocally ask clarifying questions. Some examples from the corpus compiled for the study can be found below:

Example 1

AI: I'm not sure what you mean by a "2m bear."

G.B.: I meant beard

AI: Ah, beard!

Example 2

C.A. i didn't want to mean that...

AI: No worries!

Example 3

G.F. what does complemented means

AI: "Complemented" means when two or more things work together in a way that makes each better.

Example 4

AI: Do you think music can capture the essence of a person or an emotion?

H.S. I am sorry but I dont think I quite understad what you mean by capturing hthe essence of a person or an emotion[2]

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[2] Original spelling is preserved.

COMPARING THE EFFICIENCY OF HUMAN-HUMAN AND HUMAN-AI INTERACTION FOR RAISING ELF AWARENESS IN YOUNG LEARNERS' TELECOLLABORATION – KOZLOVA, Tatiana.

223

These findings prove AI's potential to support ELF-aware pedagogy, including the development of pragmatic strategies necessary to manage real-world communication.

Interaction Dynamics

The interactions between human participants were notably balanced, with both parties mirroring each other in terms of style and length. In contrast, interactions with AI were more disproportionate, as the AI generated significantly longer responses in a formal, adult-like tone that did not align with the register typically used by young learners. This contrast affected emotional engagement, with interactions between real young learners building stronger emotional connections. It highlights the need for AI language to be calibrated to a level more appropriate for young learners, in order to create a more authentic communication experience. Moreover, the study empirically confirmed that despite the settings of AI-bots at SchoolAI that were designed to simulate intercultural communication and ELF-use, the input they produced remained Standard English.

Creativity.

In human-to-human interactions, students demonstrated significantly greater creativity in their lyrics, putting forth considerable effort to generate thoughtful and original contributions. In contrast, during interactions with AI, students primarily provided prompts and relied on the AI to generate the lyrics. This observation underscores the potential for deskilling resulting from an overreliance on technology.

Feedback.

Throughout their collaboration, learners focused more on content rather than form, often adding new ideas or modifying lines in lyrics, rather than correcting lexicogrammatical deviations from native speaker norms. This finding aligns with Grazzi's study (2014), which suggested that ELF can effectively serve the pragmatic needs of learners in collaborative settings. However, in interactions with AI, students often received immediate corrective feedback in the form of recasts, which they then incorporated into their own language use. In this context, the AI-human interactions proved to be potentially more beneficial for enhancing English language proficiency.

Translanguaging Practices.

Translanguaging, (Garcìa; Wei, 2014), a common feature of ELF communication, was observed in both human-human and human-AI interactions. Given that AI platforms

COMPARING THE EFFICIENCY OF HUMAN-HUMAN AND HUMAN-AI INTERACTION FOR RAISING ELF AWARENESS IN YOUNG LEARNERS' TELECOLLABORATION – KOZLOVA, Tatiana.

224

support communication in multiple languages, translanguaging was even more prevalent in interactions with AI, enabling learners to draw on their full linguistic repertoire.

Use of Non-Verbal Semiotic Resources.

Both interaction modalities, whether human-human or human-AI, involved the use of non-verbal semiotic resources, further enriching communication. Pupils occasionally used emojis in an attempt to bring their feelings into a digital space. If prompted by a pupil's request (e.g. *E.M. "can you put me an emoji?"*) AI also generated emojis to illustrate its points. While pupils used traditional emojis like facial expressions, emojis generated by AI-bot were more sophisticated and unique.

Deviations from the Topic.

While some deviations from the topic occurred in human-human interactions, they were far more frequent in human-AI exchanges. Students engaging with human partners tended to show a genuine curiosity about their peers, whereas those interacting with AI sometimes expressed frustration by inputting random characters (e.g. "`1234567890-=][poiuytrewqasdfghjkl;'#'/.,mnbvcxz\"). It sometimes happened when AI-bot tried to elicit a personal response from a student (e.g. by asking "What do you think?").

Emotional Engagement.

The Human-Human Interactions group demonstrated a stronger emotional engagement which can be attributed not only to the mirroring practices mentioned above but also to the understanding that students were interacting with real people. The analysis of the interaction corpus revealed that phrases like "you are not real" or "you are an AI" were used frequently, underscoring the students' awareness that they were conversing with a computer program rather than a human. However, this was not true for all learners. For instance, in response to the question "One thing you like about this activity is…" a few students wrote "I like both AI and the realism of AI".

Some of them managed to create an emotional relationship with a bot and perceived it as a friend while working on the song. They used terms of endearment, typical among close friends, while referring to the bot, producing phrases like "bro that was insane but you don't included you" or "can you include in the song some thing of you"[3]. The bots responded by adding the verses to a song that appeared too centered around a student (e.g. "And I'm here as your friend cheering you on,/Learning together, from dusk till

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[3] Original spelling is preserved.

COMPARING THE EFFICIENCY OF HUMAN-HUMAN AND HUMAN-AI INTERACTION FOR RAISING ELF AWARENESS IN YOUNG LEARNERS' TELECOLLABORATION – KOZLOVA, Tatiana.

225

dawn./With every word we share, we grow and connect,/In this rap of friendship, we're perfect, respect!"). Despite AI's ability to mimic human-like conversation, it is clear that improvements in pragmatic features are needed to offer a more authentic interaction experience.

Social Networks.

Some studies suggest that "AI companions successfully alleviate loneliness on par with interacting with another person" (De Freitas *et al.*, 2024, p.1). Such results can be achieved because bots designed for human interaction are often programmed to convey warmth and care and their emotional tone encourages engagement (*ibid*.) However, implementing AI in language classroom needs to ensure that it aligns with the developmental needs of young learners. Clearly, despite their emotional warmth, these AI agents are not real people, and relying on them instead of human interaction may deprive students of valuable opportunities to expand their social networks. Studies emphasize that the relationships students form are crucial to their development, and their opportunities are shaped not only by knowledge but also by the networks they can access (Fisher, 2018). The advent of the internet has removed geographical barriers, allowing for broader networks, and schools can harness this potential to become hubs of next-generation learning and connection. Focusing too heavily on technology and performance risks sidelining the power of human relationships, which are key to future social mobility for students.

These findings reveal the differences in the outcomes of human-human and human-AI interactions, although both contributed positively to ELF awareness and ICC, as indicated in the beginning of this section.

4 DISCUSSION

The empirical findings presented in the previous section must be considered within the context of several limitations. Firstly, while the data collection methods were consistent (same questionnaires and interview questions), the interaction modalities differed. Human-human interactions occurred in a class-to-class setting, whereas human-AI interactions involved individual students engaging with a chatbot. This disparity in interaction modes may have influenced the research outcomes. At present, SchoolAI platform cannot facilitate group interactions with AI. This raises an important

COMPARING THE EFFICIENCY OF HUMAN-HUMAN AND HUMAN-AI INTERACTION FOR RAISING ELF AWARENESS IN YOUNG LEARNERS' TELECOLLABORATION – KOZLOVA, Tatiana.

226

consideration for enhancing the functionality of current AI platforms, specifically enabling AI chatbots to serve as mediators in collaborative projects. Such improvements would help mitigate the sense of isolation associated with personalized learning paths offered by AI.

Second, the data analysis and the conclusions about the overall human-human project efficiency are only based on the Italian respondents' answers, as was explained above. This major drawback could be addressed in the future, if the authors of this study will be given access to Kyrgyz data. This would allow us to complete our research by comparing the results of the surveys conducted with both classes, in order to examine how the development of young learners' intercultural competence and ELF-awareness varied within the community of practice.

The comparative analysis highlights that while both human-human and human-AI interactions contribute to ELF awareness, they offer different but complementary benefits. Human-human interactions excel in promoting deep cultural engagement and emotional connections, which are essential for developing ICC and understanding the peculiarities of ELF communication. In contrast, human-AI interactions proved to be less efficient in this sense but they provide students with personalized, consistent language practice, offering opportunities for immediate feedback and reinforcing language skills.

The findings suggest that although AI tools can complement human interaction by providing additional practice opportunities and reinforcing learning, they cannot replace the cultural and emotional depth provided by human communication. Therefore, a blended approach, combining both modalities, could offer the best of both worlds— consistent, personalized language support through AI and rich, context-sensitive cultural interactions through human collaboration.

5 CONCLUSIONS

This study contributes to the expanding body of research on the role of AI in language education, with a particular focus on promoting ELF awareness in young learners. Both human-human and human-AI interactions positively influenced ELF awareness and intercultural communicative competence (ICC); however, human-human

COMPARING THE EFFICIENCY OF HUMAN-HUMAN AND HUMAN-AI INTERACTION FOR RAISING ELF AWARENESS IN YOUNG LEARNERS' TELECOLLABORATION – KOZLOVA, Tatiana.

227

interactions proved more effective. They also provided deeper cultural insights and emotional engagement. On the other hand, AI tools proved to be less efficient in raising ELF awareness and ICC but offered significant advantages in terms of personalized practice and consistent feedback. By combining the efficiency of AI with the emotional connection and empathy inherent in human interactions, a hybrid learning model can be developed that benefits both students and educators.

In addition, teacher education programs should focus not only on preparing educators to integrate AI tools into ELF-centered language instruction but also on emphasizing the importance of building students' social capital. In other words, while knowledge is important, developing personal connections through real telecollaboration is essential for students' future success. Forming and nurturing long-lasting bonds with peers, who can contribute to their support network, is something that cannot be replaced by technology.

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COMPARING THE EFFICIENCY OF HUMAN-HUMAN AND HUMAN-AI INTERACTION FOR RAISING ELF AWARENESS IN YOUNG LEARNERS' TELECOLLABORATION – KOZLOVA, Tatiana.

228

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229

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COMPARING THE EFFICIENCY OF HUMAN-HUMAN AND HUMAN-AI INTERACTION FOR RAISING ELF AWARENESS IN YOUNG LEARNERS' TELECOLLABORATION – KOZLOVA, Tatiana.

230

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231

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COMPARING THE EFFICIENCY OF HUMAN-HUMAN AND HUMAN-AI INTERACTION FOR RAISING ELF AWARENESS IN YOUNG LEARNERS' TELECOLLABORATION – KOZLOVA, Tatiana.

232

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ELF AND THE BRAZILIAN NATIONAL CORE CURRICULUM: THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS DIALOGUE

ILF E A BASE NACIONAL COMUM CURRICULAR:
O PAPEL FUNDAMENTAL DA FORMAÇÃO DE PROFESSORES NA CONSTRUÇÃO
E IMPLEMENTAÇÃO DESSE DIÁLOGO

Sávio Siqueira[1]

ABSTRACT: The current Brazilian National Core Curriculum (BNCC) (Brasil, 2018) adopts English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) as a guiding concept for English Language Teaching (ELT) across the country's basic education system. While the measure has sparked debate and controversy, ELF's inclusion in the document is generally seen as an innovative step. However, its implementation has brought significant challenges, especially for teachers who often lack a clear understanding of the concept or how to incorporate ELF-aware practices into their classrooms. These challenges underscore the pivotal role of teacher education in effectively integrating ELF into ELT in local contexts. Drawing on preliminary data from the research study *BNCC, ELF, and Teacher Education from a Critical and Decolonial Perspective (CNPq),* this paper examines how two groups of teachers, pre-service and in-service, respond to the challenges posed by the ELF-BNCC interplay. It explores their views on how this dialogue might evolve over time, emphasizing the importance of adopting a critical and decolonial lens in their daily practice. Initial findings suggest that younger, pre-service teachers are more at ease with ELF and its practical applications, while more experienced, in-service teachers, despite facing challenges rooted in traditional ELT paradigms, are beginning to reconsider their beliefs and classroom practices. As they work to understand ELF's pedagogical implications, many come to see it as a powerful tool for decolonizing ELT in Brazil. By positioning teacher education as a crucial link between policy and classroom practice, this paper advocates the need to equip educators not only with an understanding of ELF, but also with the critical tools to engage with it in meaningful, context-sensitive ways.
KEYWORDS: ELF. Brazilian National Common Core. ELT. Teacher Education.

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ELF AND THE BRAZILIAN NATIONAL CORE CURRICULUM:
THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND
IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS DIALOGUE – SIQUEIRA, Sávio.

234

RESUMO: A atual Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC) (Brasil, 2018) adota o inglês como língua franca (ILF) como princípio orientador para o ensino do idioma na educação básica brasileira. Embora tenha gerado debates, sua inclusão no documento é geralmente reconhecida como inovadora. No entanto, a implementação do ILF tem se mostrado desafiadora, especialmente para professores(as) que carecem de uma compreensão clara do conceito e de orientações práticas para aplicá-lo em suas salas de aula. Esses desafios apontam para o papel crucial da formação docente na integração do ILF ao ensino de inglês em contextos locais. Com base em dados preliminares da pesquisa "BNCC, ELF e Formação de Professores sob uma Perspectiva Crítica e Decolonial" (CNPq), este artigo analisa como dois grupos de professores, em formação inicial e continuada, respondem aos desafios propostos pelo diálogo ELF-BNCC. O estudo explora como esse diálogo pode evoluir ao longo do tempo, destacando a importância de se adotar uma abordagem crítica e decolonial na prática pedagógica. Os achados iniciais indicam que professores em formação inicial se sentem mais à vontade com o ILF e suas aplicações, enquanto professores mais experientes, em formação continuada, apesar de certa resistência, começam a reconsiderar suas crenças e práticas. À medida que buscam compreender as implicações pedagógicas do ILF, muitos passam a vê-lo como uma ferramenta poderosa para a decolonização do ensino de inglês no Brasil. Dessa forma, este artigo destaca a necessidade de capacitar educadores não apenas com a compreensão do ILF, mas também com as ferramentas críticas necessárias para aplicá-lo de forma sensível ao contexto local.
Palavras-chave: ILF. BNCC. Ensino de Língua Inglesa. Formação de professores.

INTRODUCTION

As of 2017, Law No. 13,415 introduced significant reforms to Brazil's educational system, including a restructured framework for lower and upper secondary education (*Ensino Fundamental II/Ensino Médio*) and the official release of the final version of the National Common Curricular Base (*Base Nacional Comum Curricular* – BNCC) (Brasil, 2018). In earlier drafts, foreign language (FL) instruction was encompassed under the broader curricular category of "Modern Foreign Languages" (*Línguas Estrangeiras Modernas* – LEM). However, in a surprising move, even to scholars who had been critically monitoring and analyzing the document, the final version narrowed this category exclusively to "English" (*Língua Inglesa* – LI).

Such a shift, which made English the only mandatory FL in Brazilian schools, both public and private, according to Rosa e Duboc (2022), reflects market-driven interests and a neoliberal rationale, flagrantly reducing the acquisition of the additional language

ELF AND THE BRAZILIAN NATIONAL CORE CURRICULUM:
THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND
IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS DIALOGUE – SIQUEIRA, Sávio.

235

to its utilitarian function. However, pointing toward a more ideologically engaged direction, it is also said to provide access to the linguistic knowledge necessary for such engagement, fostering students' critical agency and active citizenship, while expanding opportunities for interaction and mobility, among other potential benefits.

As I have discussed elsewhere (Siqueira, 2022), I do not in any way question the importance of the English language in the contemporary world nor the significant gains for students, especially those from the socioeconomically disadvantaged classes of our society, who have mastery of the so-called global lingua franca of today. But when we see efforts to invest in public policies aimed at valuing and guaranteeing democratic access to language programs anchored in multilingual education, the colonial option (Sousa Santos, 2019), as reflected in laws like the one mentioned above, leads us to conclude that this only reveals the shortsightedness of the public officials responsible for language policies in our country, bluntly reaffirming their submission to the forces of monolingualism and coloniality that remain so prevalent in our society.

As Duboc (2017) pointed out in her critical analysis of the latest version of the BNCC, this is a considerable setback that could, at the very least, generate a deleterious marginalization of other languages within foreign or additional language pedagogy and, logically, threaten multilingual education initiatives in Brazil. In her view,

> the deliberate – and authoritarian – choice of English as the [sole] modern foreign language stands in opposition to the multilingual and intercultural orientation intended in the document [BNCC] and so valued by the contemporary global society, running the risk of falling into the traps of monolingual and colonialist logic [...], whose harmful effects have already been denounced by postcolonial studies and by (including Brazilian) theorists of Critical Applied Linguistics (Duboc, 2017, p. 8).[2]

Besides these changes to the disciplinary component, the BNCC surprisingly adopts the concept of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) as a central framework for English

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[2] Original in Brazilian Portuguese: *A escolha deliberada – e autoritária – da Língua Inglesa como a língua estrangeira moderna apresenta-se na contramão da orientação plurilíngue e intercultural pretendida no documento e tão cara à sociedade global contemporânea, correndo o risco de cair nas armadilhas da lógica monolíngue e colonialista [...], cujos efeitos nocivos já vêm sendo denunciados por estudos pós-coloniais e por teóricos (brasileiros, inclusive) da Linguística Aplicada Crítica*. (All translations are my responsibility).

ELF AND THE BRAZILIAN NATIONAL CORE CURRICULUM:
THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND
IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS DIALOGUE – SIQUEIRA, Sávio.

236

Language Teaching (ELT), a move that has sparked heated debate and, as probably expected, a lot of controversy, despite being recognized by some scholars and a good number of practitioners as a somewhat progressive and forward-thinking step.

As years have passed, the *de facto* implementation of the National Curriculum has unveiled challenges of different kinds, especially for teachers, who frequently lack a clear understanding of the ELF concept or how to incorporate ELF-aware[3] practices into their classrooms. These challenges, in my view, highlight the pivotal role of teacher education in effectively integrating ELF into ELT in local contexts. This is due to the fact that changes and adaptations are needed in both pre-service and in-service teacher education, since teaching English from a lingua franca perspective leads us to question various notions traditionally upheld by the concept of English as a foreign language (EFL) which along the years have in many respects become outdated and thus call for revision and updating.

Drawing on partial data from a research study entitled *BNCC, ELF, and Teacher Education from a Critical and Decolonial Perspective, sponsored by CNPq,* this paper examines and discusses how two groups of Brazilian teachers, novice and experienced, respond to the challenges posed by the BNCC (Brasil, 2018), especially with regard to the adoption of the ELF concept, which still needs to be thoroughly unpacked in terms of practical applications. Here, I explore participants' views on how the ELF-BNCC dialogue might evolve over time, emphasizing the importance of adopting a critical and decolonial lens in their daily practice. Initial findings suggest that younger, pre-service teachers, are more at ease with ELF and its practical applications, while more experienced, in-service teachers, despite facing challenges rooted in traditional ELT paradigms such as EFL and its well-established tenets, are beginning to reconsider their beliefs and classroom practices. As both cohorts work to understand ELF's pedagogical implications, many come to see it as a powerful tool for decolonizing ELT in Brazil. By positioning teacher education as a crucial link between policy and classroom reality, I shall argue that it must now recognize and embrace the need to equip ELT educators not only with a clear understanding of ELF, but also with the critical tools to engage with it in meaningful and context-sensitive ways.

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[3] I use the concept of ELF-awareness here to refer to the process of engaging with ELF research and developing one's own comprehension of the ways in which ELF can be integrated in one's own teaching reality (see Sifakis; Bayyurt, 2018).

ELF AND THE BRAZILIAN NATIONAL CORE CURRICULUM:
THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND
IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS DIALOGUE – SIQUEIRA, Sávio.

237

1 BNCC AND ELF: ALIGNMENTS AND MISALIGNMENTS

As previously mentioned, Brazil's basic education is currently governed by a National Curriculum which, in the case of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL), imposes English as the sole language and introduces the concept of English as a lingua franca (ELF). This is based on the argument that we are dealing with a denationalized language which, due to its spread throughout the world and the extensive variation it now encompasses, no longer aligns with fixed national identities, traditional norms and certain past notions that have long sustained the globally recognized industry known as ELT.

It is important to mention that the BNCC, as mandated by law, now serves as the foundation for curricular guidelines nationwide, informing the development of state and municipal curricula in alignment with the national document. regardless of the specific linguistic needs of each educational context in one of the world's largest and most diverse countries. In fact, at this point, the imposition of English, largely driven by neoliberal agendas that frame it as the language of science, communication, technology, international businesses, globalization, professional success, etc., means that students are required to learn English first, while all other languages, whether spoken in Brazil or not, have been relegated to a secondary and largely marginal status, at best considered optional. This is, for example, the case of Spanish, which in many contexts had begun to dispute with English offers in regular schools.

It would be naïve on our part to disregard the fact that, given the current global power and dominance of English, no language policy concerning the teaching and learning of modern foreign languages could afford to overlook the importance of ensuring access to English for students in basic education, especially in the public sector. Initially through the brutal expansion of the British Empire, and later as the world increasingly came under the political, cultural, and military influence of the United States, English has, perhaps unsurprisingly, achieved a level of global hegemony unmatched by any other language. As Mohanty (2009) points out, English has shifted from being the language of colonization to the language of neo-imperialism, offering the world a wide range of justifications for its urgent acquisition. Brazil is no exception in this power dynamic, where English emerges as a tool (or perhaps even as a weapon) in the pursuit of a linguistic capital which positions its users as key players in a highly competitive global agenda.

ELF AND THE BRAZILIAN NATIONAL CORE CURRICULUM:
THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND
IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS DIALOGUE – SIQUEIRA, Sávio.

238

A closer look at the BNCC reveals that the introductory section of the 'English Language' component for *Ensino Fundamental II* (Lower Secondary) clearly aligns with the previously mentioned characteristics of a global scenario increasingly driven by the demand for English. Moreover, it expands on these ideas by arguing that learning English "can provide everyone access to the linguistic knowledge necessary for engagement and participation, contributing to [the development] of students' critical agency and the exercise of [their] active citizenship" (Brasil, 2018, p. 241). Due to this, according to the document, a formative character is established here, framing English learning within a perspective of conscious and critical language education, grounded in three key implications to the curriculum:

> [The] first implication is that [the formative nature of language learning] requires a reassessment of the relationships between language, territory, and culture, given that English speakers are no longer found only in countries where English is the official language. [...] Some concepts no longer seem adequate for understanding a language that has "gone viral" and become "hybridized," such as the concept of foreign language, which has been strongly criticized for its Eurocentric bias. [...] The approach taken by the component in the BNCC prioritizes **the social and political function of English** and, in this sense, recognizes it in its status of **lingua franca**. [...] The second implication concerns the broadening of the concept of literacy – or more precisely, **multiliteracies** – as conceived [...] within social practices [...] that connect and intertwine different semiotic systems and languages. [...] The third implication relates to teaching approaches. Recognizing English as a lingua franca entails understanding that certain beliefs – such as the notion that "there is a better English to be taught" – must be questioned. It calls for addressing local uses of English and related linguistic resources from the perspective of building a linguistic repertoire, which should be analyzed and made available to students for their use, always taking into account the condition of intelligibility in the linguistic interaction (Brasil, 2018, pp. 241–242, emphasis in original).

Broadly speaking, the adoption of the ELF concept by the BNCC as a backdrop for the developments proposed within the description of the component 'English language' can be seen as an innovation. However, as Duboc (2019) clarifies, at first sight, it gives us the impression that its insertion has practically been parachuted into the component, since it was not present in previous versions of the document nor in any other regulatory document for Brazil's national regular education. This, to some extent, may explain why many teachers showed (and still do) to be unfamiliar with the term and its developments. In this sense, it is also important to consider, as Rosa, Duboc and Siqueira (2023) note, that although the expression "to fall from a parachute" in Portuguese suggests something sudden and unexpected, implemented without preparation or planning, "the parachute itself is, in fact, a device that allows for a softened landing – in other words, when used

ELF AND THE BRAZILIAN NATIONAL CORE CURRICULUM:
THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND
IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS DIALOGUE – SIQUEIRA, Sávio.

239

intentionally and with planning, it leads to the exact opposite of the usual meaning of the expression" (p. 10). Thus, by acknowledging the polysemy of the expression, the authors explain that, depending on who is using the parachute or who is observing it descend toward the ground, different interpretations may emerge, and they add:

> From the perspective of Brazilian scientific production on ELF and its effects on certain agents in the educational field temporarily acting as *policy makers*, we are dealing with those who wear the parachute, whose fall is foreseen, calculated, and planned. On the other hand, from the perspective of the many English teachers who, overnight, came across the term ELF in a regulatory document of the ill-fated curricular component MFL [Modern Foreign Language) – now just English – we are dealing with those who watch the fall (Rosa; Duboc; Siqueira, 2023, p. 10, italics in the original).

Another important point regarding the insertion of the concept of ELF in the BNCC to be explored reveals a certain misalignment, concerns a clear contradiction between what is advocated in the initial part of the component's introductory text – where certain theoretical premises aimed at a different understanding of the English language are discussed, and the didactic frameworks presented later in the practical section basically describing linguistic content. According to Duboc (2019), a perspective I fully endorse, this is fundamentally an epistemological conflict, which she critically addresses as follows:

> In the introduction, the social and political function of language is emphasized, seemingly expanding, at first glance, beyond the technicist and instrumental function often attributed to the foreign language. [...] If, on the one hand, the considerations presented in the introductory text align with concepts and categories relevant to rethinking the status of English in contemporary times; on the other hand, the analysis of the year-by-year didactic frameworks paradoxically reveals lapses into content rigidification which, despite the document's professed adherence to a spiral curriculum design, echo an updated discourse that masks traditionally taught language content within a logic of linearity and hierarchy (Simple Present in 6th grade > Simple Past in 7th grade > Future Forms in 8th grade)[4] (Duboc, 2019, p. 17).

As we can see, such observation clearly identifies and illustrates the aforementioned conflict, and, very pertinently, Duboc (2019, p. 17) prompts us to reflect once again by posing the following question: "How can a document embrace the creative, hybrid, and

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[4] Within the Brazilian educational system, the *Fundamental II* level comprises 6th (*6º ano*) to 9th (*9º ano*) grades.

ELF AND THE BRAZILIAN NATIONAL CORE CURRICULUM:
THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND
IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS DIALOGUE – SIQUEIRA, Sávio.

240

local uses of English in its status of a lingua franca if the document itself organizes topics, knowledge objects, and skills in a linear and hierarchical way, with examples of fixed and stable linguistic content?"[5] In fact, this and many other questions are extremely necessary at this point and should be explored as the development of different state and municipal curricula derived from the BNCC progresses throughout the country.

Within this same vein of discussion, other points are raised, for example, by Santana and Kupske (2020), who draw attention to the strangeness that the term ELF still causes to teachers and what may arise from this entire process. As the authors emphasize, "the publication of the document does not guarantee that a proposed concept, such as ELF, will not be understood as just another new idealization that will not go beyond the conceptual level; nor does it guarantee that the term ELF will not, for example, be applied in practice merely as a synonym for EFL" (Santana; Kupske, 2020, p. 163).

In other words, as these and other authors advise, we cannot ignore the fact that the shift in guiding principles from English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) brings to light various theoretical and practical mismatches, with direct implications for classroom practice, many of which are still notably little understood by English teachers, the frontline agents in our schools and, consequently, the first to be affected by such changes. Due to this, it is worth posing another question: are our teachers, especially those in basic education, prepared for these changes in the field of EFL in light of the demands imposed by contemporary times?

The answer to such a general question may be much more complex than we imagine, particularly when I came across some other doubts from the participants of the study mentioned here. I add here some of them: "What is ELF? How practical is it for my 40-minute class reality?"; "How can I teach ELF if I don't even know what it is?"; "What actually changes in my classroom with the adoption of ELF?"; "Now, with ELF, is everything possible? I don't correct students anymore?"; "What type of training and recycling will I need to work with ELF?"; "With ELF, should I disregard American and British English and instead embrace 'Brazilian English'?"

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[5] In the original: *Como pode um documento acolher os usos criativos, híbridos e locais do inglês em seu status de língua franca se o próprio documento organiza, linear e hierarquicamente, temas, objetos de conhecimento e habilidades, com exemplos de conteúdos linguísticos fixos e estáveis?*

ELF AND THE BRAZILIAN NATIONAL CORE CURRICULUM:
THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND
IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS DIALOGUE – SIQUEIRA, Sávio.

241

Bearing this in mind, and taking these questions into consideration, I will explore in the following section some data extracted from the cited research study in order to attempt to grasp participants' understanding of ELF and the implications of its adoption by the BNCC. I will also examine whether they feel prepared to teach English from an ELF perspective (in contrast to an EFL perspective) and whether the professional education they have received (in-service) or are currently receiving (pre-service) meets the demands emerging from this new scenario.

2 ELF AND BNCC: HEARING BRAZILIAN TEACHERS

Entitled *English as a Lingua Franca, BNCC, and Teacher Education from a Critical and Decolonial Perspective,* this project, for which I am the lead researcher, is funded by the Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq). The excerpts analyzed here are part of a longer questionnaire, one of the data collection instruments used in the study. The main goal of the work is to promote advanced studies on ELF and its political-pedagogical implications for our language education context, aiming at the professional development of student-teachers and in-service teachers in the city of Salvador, Brazil, and its metropolitan area. It is important to highlight that many English teachers in Brazil start their careers without a university degree. So, it is quite common for them to enroll in teacher education programs (Letras courses) after gaining some teaching experience, especially those working in the private sector.

The study encompasses 12 local English teachers (*n*=12), selected through personal invitation, with 6 pre-service and 6 in-service teachers. In terms of gender, there are 10 women and 2 men, with ages ranging from 21 to 55 years. The teaching experience varies from 1 to 30 years. The instruments used for data collection are: (1) questionnaires, (2) focus groups, and (3) non-participant class observations. In terms of educational contexts for each cohort, four of the pre-service teachers are currently enrolled at UFBA's language research and extension programs, two teach at elite private schools, while all the in-service teachers are employed in regular state public schools.

The data explored in this paper consists of three questions extracted from one of the questionnaires, where the broader issue involves participants' familiarity with the ELF concept, its developments and implications along with their reactions towards the adoption of ELF by the National Curriculum. It also explores if and to what extent they

ELF AND THE BRAZILIAN NATIONAL CORE CURRICULUM:
THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND
IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS DIALOGUE – SIQUEIRA, Sávio.

242

think they are prepared to teach their ELT classes under an ELF perspective. More specifically, here are the questions posed to participants that I will explore:

> **Question 1**: *How familiar are you with the ELF concept, its developments and implications?*
>
> **Question 2:** *How do you evaluate the adoption of the ELF concept by the National Curriculum (BNCC)?*
>
> **Question 3:** *How do you evaluate your formal education in terms of preparing you to become an English teacher today? Do you feel prepared to teach English from an ELF perspective as recommended by the National Curriculum?*

In terms of data analysis and discussion, it is important to mention that for each question, some direct quotes from the participants will be presented. However, due to space constraints, only excerpts from a select few respondents will be included. Each teacher is identified by the letter T and a number from 1 to 12. *In-service teachers* are numbered from 1 to 6, and *pre-service teachers* from 7 to 12. Questions and answers were originally written in Portuguese, so the translation to English is my responsibility. The analysis is primarily descriptive, incorporating some inferential statistics, and is grounded in the theoretical framework outlined above.

The initial question to address is: *How familiar are you with the ELF concept, its developments and implications?* Based on the responses, in-service or more experienced teachers seem to be LESS FAMILIAR with the term ELF. For example, T1 admitted to not having read much about the concept, but due to its inclusion in the National Curriculum, he recognizes the need to study the topic: *I haven't really read much, but I want to improve my knowledge about it*. T2, in her turn, argues that she has some familiarity with the ELF concept, and that its adoption by the National Curriculum has motivated her to conduct more in-depth studies on the topic: *I have been trying to update myself on the ELF concept and its implications, so I could say that I have some familiarity with the term*. T3 says she is fairly familiar with the term ELF, but, in her view, the insertion of the concept in the BNCC is basically an action to use a concept that is in vogue at the moment, without much clarity as to practical actions and implications: *I am sort of familiar with the term, but I think it was inserted in the National Curriculum more as part of a "concept update" than as a proposal for pedagogical practice.*

ELF AND THE BRAZILIAN NATIONAL CORE CURRICULUM:
THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND
IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS DIALOGUE – SIQUEIRA, Sávio.

243

Pre-service or less experienced teachers on the other hand appear to be MORE FAMILIAR with the ELF concept, as the topic is commonly addressed in their current university programs, particularly in Applied Linguistics courses. T7, for instance, says she is well-versed in ELF due to its growing significance in ELT: *I'm very familiar with the concept of ELF due to its growing importance in ELT*. Equally, T9 assumes her familiarity with the concept and points out that ELF already plays an important role in her everyday ELT practices: *I'm very familiar with ELF*; *I think it directly influences my pedagogical practice*. T10 shares a similar perspective, noting that although she has limited experience with the BNCC as a novice teacher, she is familiar with ELF through her undergraduate studies and participation in the "ELF Brasil-UFBA" research group: *Despite my limited experience, ELF is familiar to me due to the opportunities offered in my university course, the disciplines, and the research group I participate in*. Overall, of the six in-service teachers, only two expressed confidence in their familiarity with ELF. In contrast, five pre-service teachers out of six reported being familiar with the concept.

As for the second question, *How do you evaluate the adoption of the ELF concept by the National Curriculum (BNCC)?*, the more experienced teachers were evenly split in their assessment of the adoption of ELF in the BNCC: three viewed it as a positive step, while the other half saw it as challenging. When justifying her response, T2 stated: *I believe the term was inserted in the BNCC as a way of using current concepts, as well as interculturality and multiliteracies*. T4, in turn, said that *incorporating ELF into our practice means going beyond linguistic topics and addressing social, cultural and political issues; it is about empowering our students to use a language that allows them to connect with the world*, whereas T6 reported that *the concept was added to the BNCC because it is in line with the idea proposed in the document of considering the plurality of native and non-native speakers, as well as prioritizing communication rather than accuracy in the use of the language*.

In the group of pre-service teachers, the majority – four of them – acknowledged that the insertion of ELF in the National Curriculum was a challenging step, while one viewed it positively and another considered it a right decision. Some of the reflections from this group of teachers are presented here. T7, for example, affirms: *I have some resistance in implementing this concept in a traditional educational environment like ours as there is still an overemphasis on Standard English and a reluctance or neglect to*

ELF AND THE BRAZILIAN NATIONAL CORE CURRICULUM:
THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND
IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS DIALOGUE – SIQUEIRA, Sávio.

244

recognize linguistic variety. For T11, *the adoption of ELF by the BNCC makes me see progress in challenging the traditional EFL vision, but I believe there is still a long way to go before this happens effectively*. T12, in turn, says that *ELF should be implemented despite the problems surrounding a context as complicated as that of Brazilian education, which not only does it face discrepancies in materials and resources between private and public schools, but also the colonized and rooted vision in the minds of the majority of Brazilians regarding the study of English and what is considered fluency and proficiency*.

As we can see, the responses are quite insightful and touch on various aspects, not only regarding what these teachers know and feel about the concept of ELF, but also the challenges they may face due to deeply rooted beliefs and dogmas related to ELT. These challenges also include resistance from students and other stakeholders, such as parents, coordinators, school directors, teacher educators, etc., who may still hold a colonized mindset shaped by the longstanding traditions of the ELT industry, which is largely grounded in the EFL perspective, with all its expectations and implications. In other words, regardless of each group's level of expertise and experience, the presence of ELF in the BNCC is generally perceived as challenging. However, it is also seen as something that, if better understood and implemented according to the specificities of each context, can surely have a positive impact on classroom practice.

Regarding the final (double) question, *How do you evaluate your education in terms of preparing you to become an English teacher today? Do you feel prepared to teach English from an ELF perspective as recommended by the National Curriculum?*, I begin with the second part by highlighting that three different responses emerged across both groups: YES, PARTIALLY, and NO. Among the in-service teachers, the responses were evenly distributed, with two of the six participants aligning with each of the three categories. In the pre-service cohort, the majority (four) chose 'partially,' while the remaining two selected 'yes'. The good news here is that none of them considered themselves unprepared to teach English from an ELF perspective.

When it comes to reflecting on their formal education and training to become English language teachers in today's world, all in-service teachers admitted that, in retrospect, their university courses did not adequately prepare them for the current challenges faced by English language professionals. According to them, much of what they know is the result of personal effort to learn, adapt, and grow in their careers, especially

ELF AND THE BRAZILIAN NATIONAL CORE CURRICULUM:
THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND
IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS DIALOGUE – SIQUEIRA, Sávio.

245

when it comes to new theories and alternative perspectives in teaching and learning. T2, for instance, states: *My initial training was not very efficient, but my curiosity and desire to learn were very strong. However, I don't feel prepared to teach English from an ELF perspective yet.* T3, in turn, says: *In my context, everything I know or have learned was due to my own initiative – not because it was offered to me; zero preparation for this new reality.* T4 expresses a similar view: *My training and development took place mostly during my graduate studies (MA and PhD), where I had the opportunity to focus on these issues. Today, I feel prepared to engage in teaching practices from an ELF perspective.*

The novice teachers, on the other hand, expressed a more positive view of their formal education. In their responses, they affirmed that their courses, to some extent, broadened their understanding by addressing topics such as ELF and the development of ELF-aware materials,[6] as illustrated by T9's response: *During my undergrad, internships and additional training courses I was able to acquire experience and knowledge to create materials and use tools and strategies aligned with an ELF perspective.*

Despite this more optimistic view, it is important to consider that much work remains to be done especially in the field of teacher education. As evidenced by the responses of T10 and T12, many future teachers complete their undergraduate courses feeling that, even though they have been exposed to ELF-related theories and recent developments in ELT, the reality they encounter, especially in regular schools, presents significant challenges that go far beyond language proficiency or familiarity with contemporary concepts and practices. This is illustrated in T10's response: *I'm not sure if I'm prepared to apply ELF in my reality. Despite having had theoretical contact with ELF studies, I feel that the lack of resources and support from the institution are still difficult obstacles to implement such a practice.* In that sense, T12 expresses a similar concern: *Not completely. I feel that during my initial training there was a lack of more real and practical examples, thinking about the reality that we find not only in terms of resources and/or equipment to promote more dynamic classes, but also the mentality that you will find in the classroom regarding learning English in our regular schools.*

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[6] By ELF-aware materials I mean teaching resources designed and/or adapted to reflect English as it is used among speakers from diverse *linguacultural* backgrounds. Such materials are expected to consider and privilege diversity, flexibility, real-world variation, and communication strategies rather than fixed native-speaker based norms.

ELF AND THE BRAZILIAN NATIONAL CORE CURRICULUM:
THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND
IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS DIALOGUE – SIQUEIRA, Sávio.

246

These reflections remind us that one of the greatest challenges lies in the prevailing mentality surrounding various aspects of ELT. In this sense, we are once again led back to consider the notion of ELT as an essentially colonial enterprise, a genuine product of colonialism (Pennycook, 1998), and as we have discussed on several occasions, there is an urgent need to decolonize its underlying assumptions and deeply ingrained conceptions, so that we can move beyond the traditional EFL model, which is rooted in an ethnocentric view of language and culture. This shift, as one might agree, calls for the implementation of, among other changes, a critical, decolonial, and ELF-aware perspective to ELT – one that actively challenges and dismantles the barriers maintained by a legion of gatekeepers who must come to terms with the fact that sustaining such conventional ELT orientations is no longer viable, as they have become increasingly obsolete.

It is precisely within this context, considering the Brazilian educational landscape, where the concept of ELF is adopted in the National Curriculum for the 'English' component, that I recognize and advocate for the crucial role of teacher education in building and implementing this dialogue. This is what I will explore in the following section.

3 TEACHER EDUCATION AS A CATALYST

Based on the theoretical elaborations and the analysis of selected data from the aforementioned research project, I now put forward the thesis that teacher education is to serve as a catalyst in enabling the effective articulation between ELF and the BNCC in the Brazilian context. Despite the inherent tensions involved in embedding a complex and fluid concept such as ELF into the text of the curricular document that clearly diverge from the inclusive, hybrid, and mixed nature of the phenomenon, and the linearity and hierarchical organization of content that represents a clear incongruity in relation to the principles of an ELF perspective (see Seidlhofer, 2011; Kiczkowiak; Lowe, 2018; Kordia, 2019, etc.), many of the precepts found in the BNCC for the English component "are worthy of recognition for their attempt to break away from conventional practices" (Duboc, 2019, p. 19). Thus, the already cited epistemological conflict should not be seen as something that cannot be overcome or, at the very least, effectively managed. That is why I think it is essential to work with teachers at both pre-service and in-service levels.

ELF AND THE BRAZILIAN NATIONAL CORE CURRICULUM:
THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND
IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS DIALOGUE – SIQUEIRA, Sávio.

247

Once they feel confident and aware of what lies ahead in terms of teaching English from an ELF perspective, whether in theoretical or practical terms, they will recognize (and act upon) the fact that there are always opportunities for rupture, either through spaces of maneuver (Morgan, 2010) or through the curricular and programmatic fissures that emerge in everyday classroom practice (Duboc, 2015).

Before turning our attention to the teachers themselves, I would like to focus on teacher education, paying closer attention to the role of teacher educators within this increasingly challenging landscape of ELT. As a de-nationalized language, English, which today has more non-native speakers than native ones, presents a number of characteristics that must be considered when engaging in the process of teaching and learning it. These include high levels of hybridity, significant diversity among its users, and, most importantly, the potential it offers speakers to engage in constant and meaningful intercultural interactions with interlocutors from across the globe, representing a wide range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

The first step to be considered in this particular issue is the proposal to conceive teacher education as a space for *unlearning*, that is, an environment where we, as teacher educators, are willing to engage in a reflective process leaving behind certainties and, with humility, revisiting and rethinking the political, ideological, epistemic, and pedagogical foundations upon which we base our practices in *Letras* programs across the country. In this sense, we move away from what futurist author Alvin Toffler predicted in the final decade of the last century, when he stated that the illiterate of the 21st century would not be those who cannot read or write, but those who are unable to learn, unlearn, and relearn. As posed by Sifakis (2014), *learning* relates to experience, the creation and reinforcement of habits; *unlearning* involves challenging existing knowledge and creating space for novelty; and *relearning* points to engaging in actions that rebuild connections and realign directions. These premises, I believe, can be connected to what Walsh (2018) conceives as a decolonial praxis, in which *learning to unlearn in order to relearn* is a core component of decoloniality. Among other insights, Walsh reinforces the importance of viewing our daily practice as "pedagogical scenarios of learning, unlearning, relearning, reflection, and action" (Walsh, 2018, p. 88), reminding us that what matters most is achieving an engaged, emancipatory, and liberatory pedagogy. In other words, we must abandon a lot of our certainties and unlearn in order to learn and think otherwise.

As such movements take place within teacher education, it is only natural that many of these changes begin to shape teachers' daily practices, given that they are being educated on new bases, especially when we consider the different issues that must cut across the area as a whole if we are to foster educators capable of developing critical and decolonial attitudes. It is along these lines that Duboc (2023), challenges us to think and do ELT otherwise. Drawing on lessons from decoloniality, the author argues that it is impossible to "denounce coloniality if one is not able to identify and interrogate coloniality from the inside out" (Duboc, 2023, p. 138). So, in this sense, our goal as ELT professionals working in a field heavily influenced by colonial forces is ultimately to interrupt coloniality (Menezes de Souza; Duboc, 2021).

A similar correlation can be made with the common pursuit of the critical educator, or, as some prefer, the critical pedagogue. As we know, we do not form critical teachers overnight (and no one becomes critical in an instant), especially if we, as teacher educators, are not willing to serve at the very least as examples – and perhaps even as sources of inspiration – for both current and future colleagues we are to work with. In other words, how can we expect the teachers we prepare and work with to adopt a critical-decolonial stance if our own posture, beliefs, and behaviors often embody the very opposite of the expectations and principles we aim to promote?

It is no secret that many of us remain tied to the ideological, epistemological, and pedagogical dogmas of the past, maintaining an almost dogmatic loyalty to certain EFL-sustaining principles, such as the native-speaker model, monolingualism, hegemonic cultural references, ethnocentrism, prestige accents, excessive normativity, and the exclusion of English varieties from the classroom, among others. As we know, these principles no longer resonate within ELT under ELF, World Englishes, and Global Englishes perspectives, nor across various fields of language studies as they once did. After all, as previously pointed out, "[...] a good deal of our taken-for-granted ELT practices have been threatened with the prospect of being declared obsolete for the simple reason that they do not take into account some of the most significant characteristics of [English as lingua franca]" Rajagopalan (2004, p. 113-114)[7]. Due to this, as the author further

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[7] While Rajagopalan refers to the concept of World English (WE) in the original text, I interpret his description of the global spread and diversification of English as closely aligned with the notion of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), which is why I adopt ELF in the citation.

ELF AND THE BRAZILIAN NATIONAL CORE CURRICULUM:
THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND
IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS DIALOGUE – SIQUEIRA, Sávio.

249

argues, "those of us who accept the notion of [ELF] need to go back to the drawing board and rethink our entire approach to ELT, no matter what the specific context we happen to find ourselves working in." (Rajagopalan, 2004, p. 112).

As I have been proposing here, going back to the books and rethinking many aspects related to our professional life, is not a task that concerns only teachers, but primarily teacher educators, who, I believe, also play a leading role in this increasingly challenging endeavor of teaching English to the world. With this in mind, and taking the idea of a critical and decolonial teacher education as a backdrop, I bring here a set of questions (see Table 1 below) intended to support reflection on decision-making processes that might, in some way, help turn our views as teacher educators toward more democratic horizons and, above all, toward possibilities for rethinking and reshaping ELT. In other words, to conceive and do ELT otherwise.

Table 1 - Questions for reflection from the teacher educator's perspective

(1) What epistemological, political, and ideological foundations should we adopt in our teacher education practice?	(7) What curricular and programmatic revisions and updates should be undertaken?
(2) Which beliefs should be deconstructed, and which should be embraced?	(8) What assessment systems should we adopt, adapt, or create?
(3) What conception of language should prevail in our theoretical approaches?	(9) Which materials are most suitable to select for new realities?
(4) What mentalities, assumptions, and postures should be decolonized?	(10) What pluralities should we embrace, and what other lenses should we use?
(5) Which practices and models need to be questioned, expanded, or discontinued?	(11) Which literatures in English should be made available in teacher education practices?
(6) Which cultures, accents, and worlds (both English-speaking and others) should be prioritized in the classroom?	(12) What dialogues should we cultivate with our peers, fellow teacher educators, and other researchers?

Elaborated by author

For sure, these questions are far from exhaustive, especially because they must be asked and expanded from a local perspective, involving both teacher educators and teachers who, together, can reflect on and plan both a teacher education process and pedagogical practices that respond to the needs of their specific contexts and, consequently, of their learners.

ELF AND THE BRAZILIAN NATIONAL CORE CURRICULUM:
THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND
IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS DIALOGUE – SIQUEIRA, Sávio.

250

Bearing this in mind, I would like to expand further on my proposal to provoke my fellow teacher educators by advancing the argument that, if we aim for English language teacher education that is aligned with the demands of contemporary times, particularly within Global South contexts, we must begin considering a relearning from new onto-epistemological foundations. That is, as aforementioned, we should recognize that it is possible to conceive and do teacher education otherwise. In light of this, I attempt to outline below some challenges that I consider essential when reframing teacher education in dialogue with the concept of ELF (Table 2). In this context, and assuming the role of a catalyst, teacher education must ensure that English teaching from an ELF perspective, as advocated by the BNCC, can only be effectively implemented if changes and adaptations are made at multiple levels. Teacher education, in my view, is essential for turning this dialogue into concrete action.

Table 2: Challenges for reframing teacher education in dialogue with ELF

• Conceive Teacher Education (TE) as a space for unlearning, learning, and relearning through critical perspectives, recognizing language teaching as a political act; • Take TE as central in integrating ELF-based ELT practices, while accounting for the complexity and diversity of local contexts; • Approach ELF and its developments through a critical, local, and potentially decolonial lens within TE programs; • Emphasize locally grounded understandings of ELF, focusing on its context-specific, idiosyncratic use in varied educational settings; • Value interculturality by encouraging students' to engage in translingual practices and make full use of their multilingual and multicultural repertoires in the classroom; • Explore ELF's potential to decolonize ELT, recognizing that decolonizing ELT is intrinsically connected to decolonizing TE and vice-versa;	• Reject monoglossic ideologies, native-speakerism, accentism, etc., by actively decolonizing beliefs, attitudes, concepts, practices, curricula, methodologies, and assessment systems; • Critically evaluate global ELT materials produced by the industry under an ELF lens; prioritize the use and development of local materials that avoid neutral, decontextualized themes and instead center socially relevant, real-world issues; • Decolonize and expand ELF scholarship by welcoming and legitimizing a diversity of voices, especially those historically marginalized or silenced, across educational policy, research, and pedagogy; • Provide access to a plurality of ELF research and findings, stimulating teachers to draw on these resources in order to think and do ELT otherwise (Duboc, 2023).

Elaborated by author

At the same time, I consider it equally relevant to the ongoing discussion to briefly present Duboc's (2023) suggestions, who, drawing on Duboc and Siqueira (2020),

ELF AND THE BRAZILIAN NATIONAL CORE CURRICULUM:
THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND
IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS DIALOGUE – SIQUEIRA, Sávio.

251

presents some decolonial attitudes or gestures that, in her view, can serve as inspiration for both English teachers and teacher educators. These actions potentially indicate concrete ways to challenge behaviors and attitudes characterized by Anjum and Shah, (2024, p. 11) as "colonial compliance and pedagogy of complacency" which remain so prevalent in our academic and professional environments:

i. fostering epistemic disobedience and de-linking, [...] making noise in the well-established Western modes of knowing toward our detachment from the ties of Western-based ideas;

ii. thinking otherwise, that is, "developing constant and vigilant analysis of what is known and, mainly, who knows in attempts to change not only the content of the conversation but also the terms of the conversation" (Duboc; Siqueira, 2020, p. 238);

iii. decolonizing between the cracks: rather than a revolutionary move, I still find it necessary to acknowledge teachers' potentialities in those small places and spaces within classroom practices, the cracks, the gaps, the fissures of the curriculum, so to speak, as fruitful opportunities to interrogate and interrupt racial micro-aggressions;

iv. *andar preguntando*: the expression inspired by Mexican Maya-people Tojolabal cosmology [...] is in line with Freire's pedagogy of the question toward a genuine horizontal dialogue in which multiple perspectives are ethically acknowledged. One of the implications of this decolonial gesture lies in its potential to go beyond content-based language classes in which classrooms become arenas for meaningful debates around real social problems (Duboc, 2023, pp. 139-140).

It is important to clarify that the points I raise here are not to be interpreted as a "witch hunt," nor should they suggest that everything accomplished so far in the field of English teacher education is completely outdated and therefore must be discarded. On the contrary, new knowledge builds upon existing knowledge, and in science, every advancement shall acknowledge its origins while pointing toward new directions as part of an ongoing process that is to keep moving forward.

My expectation is that these reflections serve as a starting point for us, scholars, researchers, and ELT professionals, to critically examine whether, and to what extent, we may be clinging to our comfort zones, neglecting aspects of our duties that need to be, at minimum, updated. In other words, I basically seek to offer a glimpse of what we, as

ELF AND THE BRAZILIAN NATIONAL CORE CURRICULUM:
THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND
IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS DIALOGUE – SIQUEIRA, Sávio.

252

contemporary English teacher educators, can access in order to perhaps embark on an inner journey, whether as professionals and/or active citizens, to ultimately decide what makes sense for us and our daily practices. It is my belief that by engaging in critical reflection on our work, we can determine how relevant or obsolete different conceptions are within our particular contexts as "making room for reflexivity in already packed curricula poses many challenges and questions" (Morán Panero, 2024, p. 121).

CONCLUDING WORDS

The main objective of this paper was to explore the thesis that teacher education plays a crucial role as a mediator in the dialogue between the National Curriculum (BNCC) and its approach to the newly introduced component, English (*Língua Inglesa*), now the only mandatory foreign/additional language in the Brazilian educational system. By acknowledging the political function of English, the BNCC has then adopted the concept of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), which, according to document, implies that certain beliefs historically associated to the EFL tradition should be contested and reframed.

Taking into account some responses to questions related to this theme, provided by participants (pre-service and in-service teachers) in the research study *BNCC, ELF, and Teacher Education from a Critical and Decolonial Perspective*, I arrived at a few conclusions I would like to share in this final session of the article.

First, ELF and ELF-related studies are gradually, yet steadily, being incorporated into teacher education agendas and curricula in both undergraduate and graduate courses in Brazil, and I must admit that the BNCC has played a role in reinforcing this trend. Despite this, the concept of ELF remains somewhat unclear for many teachers, and due to various pedagogical, institutional, structural, and cultural factors, teaching English from an ELF perspective is still perceived as a significant challenge.

Second, younger (pre-service) teachers appear to be more open to ELF and its practical developments, while more experienced (in-service) teachers, in spite of being challenged by the constraints of traditional ELT tenets, are starting to reimagine their teaching practices as they explore the political and pedagogical dimensions of ELF. Although not explored in depth, both groups recognize the potential of ELF as a powerful

ELF AND THE BRAZILIAN NATIONAL CORE CURRICULUM:
THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND
IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS DIALOGUE – SIQUEIRA, Sávio.

253

element for decolonizing ELI and for rethinking and reframing teacher education more broadly.

On a final note, I would like to point out that the coloniality of the English language, much like that of ELT, both enduring legacies of colonialism, remains a well-documented reality, long subjected to critique, resistance, and, at this point, calls for reform. While many of the issues discussed here may not directly impact teachers across all contexts, it is crucial to recognize that teaching English today goes beyond merely transmitting a language of considerable power, influence, and value.

Particularly in Global South contexts, these practices represent acts of resistance and disobedience against the hegemonic forces that maintain the abyssal divide between legitimized knowledge producers from the Global North and the perpetual consumers from other parts of the world. By advocating for the crucial role of teacher education in facilitating the integration of ELF into everyday classroom practices, as outlined in the BNCC, this approach becomes, among other things, a step toward decolonizing ELT. With this in mind, I see teacher education, both pre-service and in-service, as a fundamental space for this transformative process. In fact, it is within teacher education that we can actively challenge hegemonic structures and move toward more inclusive, contextually relevant teaching practices.

The small portion of data from my ongoing study with non-native teachers of English in Brazil, once again, suggests that change is already on the horizon in both teaching perspectives and teacher education as a whole. This is particularly evident as the long-established principles of ELT are increasingly viewed as neither untouchable nor immutable and, in many cases, as already mentioned, are now considered outdated, if not irrelevant. By reinforcing this potential for change, I would say that it is long overdue to recognize that teaching English today is far more than mere language instruction, it is a profound act of agency, resistance, and redefinition in the face of enduring colonial legacies. In this sense, it is crucial to acknowledge that the urgency of rethinking ELT through critical and decolonial lenses has never been greater. Many of us, as teachers and teacher educators worldwide, clearly assume that the persistent coloniality of English and ELT demands critical engagement, resistance, and transformative pedagogical action.

ELF AND THE BRAZILIAN NATIONAL CORE CURRICULUM:
THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND
IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS DIALOGUE – SIQUEIRA, Sávio.

254

All in all, working alongside movements that envision a rewarding process of unlearning in order to relearn in every sense can in many ways demonstrate that teaching and learning English in these contemporary times goes way beyond putting together organized and well-founded pedagogical tasks, it is a mission for life, since we are all the time dealing with and impacting the lives of many people. As a Global South scholar – at least within ELF studies today – I see our diverse Global South ELT contexts as a privileged arena where this revolution holds great potential to unfold and develop. I extend here my invitation to anyone who would like to join us in this exciting and promising endeavor.

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ELF AND THE BRAZILIAN NATIONAL CORE CURRICULUM:
THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND
IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS DIALOGUE – SIQUEIRA, Sávio.

255

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ELF AND THE BRAZILIAN NATIONAL CORE CURRICULUM:
THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND
IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS DIALOGUE – SIQUEIRA, Sávio.

256

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